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HENRY OF NAVARRE



Henry

HENRY OF NAVARRE

by
QUENTIN HURST

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मैत्रीलाख

Class No. (विभाग) 923

Book No. (पुस्तक) 4586 H

Received On.

First printed 1937

3759

Made and Printed in Great Britain for Hodder & Stoughton Limited, by
Wyman & Sons Limited, London, Reading and Fakenham

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CHAPTER I

HENRY, THE MAN AND HIS TIME

I

ON Friday the 14th May, 1610, in the narrow Rue de la Ferronnerie at Paris, Henry IV, King of France, famous in song and story as Henry of Navarre, was assassinated by Ravallac, a half-demented Catholic. The impression was profound. In the turbulent years which followed, the inconstancy of his character and his unbridled passions were forgotten. The glories of "the Protestant hero," the saviour of France, and the father of his people, were magnified. Four days after his death the Earl of Salisbury referred to him in the English Parliament as "the lash for the insolence of the most powerful princes, the bulwark against those who menaced Great Britain, the mediator and moderator of strife among sovereigns." Duplessis-Mornay called him "the greatest King that Christianity has known these five hundred years." The people remembered him as the man who had promised that every peasant should have a fire in his hearth and a chicken in his pot. In 1789 the revolutionaries spared his statue which stood on the Pont Neuf when the statue of no other king was allowed to remain. Still later Macaulay thought of Henry as the pattern of Protestant integrity, and as a forerunner of the Christian soldiers of the Victorian

age typified by Havelock, Stonewall Jackson and Gordon.

The Henry of legend, however, is not the Henry of fact. His immense reputation derives much of its magic from the unworthiness of his successors. He was a man and not a weakling : he was jovial and familiar, not a self-appointed deity. If his charm was great so were his faults. Burke perceived the absurdity of the legend but he also appreciated his true greatness. In the "Reflections on the French Revolution," he says : "I have observed the affectation which for many years past has prevailed in Paris even to a degree perfectly childish of idolising the memory of your Henry IV. If anything could put one out of humour with that ornament to the Kingly character it would be this overdone style of insidious panegyrick. Henry of Navarre was a resolute, active and politick prince. He possessed indeed great humanity and mildness ; but an humanity and mildness that never stood in the way of his interests. He never sought to be loved without putting himself into a position to be feared. He used soft language and determined conduct. He asserted and maintained his authority in the gross and distributed his acts of concession only in the detail." That is indeed a truer picture, but it is not complete, for it makes no mention of Henry's ingratitude nor of his overwhelming passions which often made him appear soft and ridiculous.

He had nothing of a saint. His character was full of inconsistencies. He seems to embody in one person all the conflicting characteristics of his ill-assorted ancestors and of his versatile age. Learning and sensuality, religion and rationalism, unscrupulousness and humanity, barbarity and civilisation, are all

inextricably mingled in his character. It is almost impossible to understand him fully because at one moment he appears a hero and at another a monster. Whatever he was, he had a personal charm which goes far to condone his faults. Almost without exception, from the austere Coligny to the frivolous Epéron, from the leaguer Jeannin to the Protestant Sully, his contemporaries loved and admired him. Among the exceptions were Condé, whose wife he coveted, and Soissons, whose betrothed he gave to another.

Henry lived in exciting times. He grew up amid civil wars. He had thrust upon him the leadership of the Huguenots, whose internal dissensions and numerical inferiority made it impossible for them ever to win. Toleration was a thing unknown in an age in which rationalism had still to conquer men's minds. It took Henry nearly forty years to prove to himself and to France the truth of the statement of the Chancellor Michel de l'Hôpital that though "unity is the *bene esse* of a commonwealth yet toleration is the *esse*." Before the lesson was learnt Catholic and Protestant alike had called in the forces of feudal anarchy and of the self-seeking foreigner, and in doing so had all but destroyed the existence of the French nation. Because Henry was first a Protestant leader he was able to preserve the spirit of liberty and free inquiry. Because he was later a Catholic he was able to unite all Frenchmen. Because he was always a "politique," he saved his country from permanent disintegration and from becoming a province of all-powerful Spain. Great was his achievement; but it was only great because he was the supreme opportunist.

II

The age into which Henry of Navarre was born was indeed one in which successful statesmanship was inevitably coloured by opportunism. It was an age of conflict both intellectual and physical. Francis I, who reigned from 1515 to 1547, was in one aspect a mere adventurer, but in another he was the first national monarch. His lifelong opposition to the House of Habsburg, which ruled both the Spanish dominions, including the modern Kingdoms of Belgium and Holland, and the Holy Roman Empire, was actuated by a desire to make France a strong and united nation and thus to enable him to overthrow a personal enemy who threatened to encircle and to crush his kingdom. The civil wars were destined to reduce France to such a state of weakness that the Habsburgs might well claim to be the arbiters of Europe. Henry's policy was to be the same as Francis I's. So was that of Richelieu. The ascendancy of Spain and Austria had to be checked before France could consider herself safe and before she could take her place as one of the leading nations of Europe.

Francis' opposition to the Habsburgs made it necessary for him to seek the alliance of Protestant states. His policy in this respect also was continued by Henry and by Richelieu. But whereas Henry had been a Protestant himself, Francis dreaded the growth of heresy within his own kingdom and did his best to exterminate it. He believed that no state could survive without religious unity. Henry, by making what in effect was a treaty with his Protestant subjects, proved that it could.

The Reformation in France has little in common with that in Germany. Jacques Lefèvre of Etaples may fairly claim the title of father of French Protestantism. A lecturer in theology at Paris, he had in a commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul taught the doctrine of justification by faith five years before Luther nailed his famous theses to the church door at Wittenberg in 1517. Francis was at first disposed to tolerate the new religion chiefly because it was bitterly opposed by the Sorbonne and the Parlement of Paris, institutions for which Francis had no love. Unfortunately for the Protestants, the King's attitude underwent a complete change after his defeat at Pavia in 1525. His political necessities demanded an alliance with the Pope, who was forming the Holy League against the Emperor, and with the clergy at home, who could supply him with money to continue the war. In addition, he became seriously alarmed by the iconoclastic activities of a section of the Protestants, and his later years were marred by the massacre of the Vaudois in Provence. At his orders twenty towns and villages were destroyed and some three thousand Protestants were butchered.

French Protestantism rapidly came under the influence of Calvin, whose stern doctrine of predestination made a greater appeal to the logical nature of the French than the largely negative teaching of Luther, who was himself a conservative thinker. The new creed now became dissociated from the literary movement with which it had hitherto been connected. Its churches were organised on the democratic system of Geneva, and the movement for the first time became political and aggressive. It is no wonder that persecution

increased in the time of Henry II, the successor of Francis I.

Nevertheless the number of Protestants, or Huguenots as they began to be called, grew apace, and by the time that Henry of Navarre was born they were too numerous and too obstinate in their heresy to be put down by such persecution as was possible. It is difficult to ascertain the relative strength of the Protestants and Catholics at any particular time, but it is certain that the former never included more than a small fraction of the nation. It was at no time conceivable that they would be able to force their opinions on the whole of France. It is estimated that at the beginning of the wars they numbered some 400,000. They were most numerous in the southern and western provinces, and they were in a decided majority in the great towns of La Rochelle, Montauban and Nîmes. The greater part were either burghers and tradesmen of some substance, or belonged to the smaller nobility, a military class which was only too ready to appeal to arms. It is true that some of the greater nobles from time to time adopted the new faith, but for the most part they were out for their own ends and hoped to turn the religious discontent to their own temporal advantage. In Coligny and Condé almost alone was real religious conviction to be found.

The problem was made more difficult by the disorganised condition of France. Prolonged foreign war had aggravated the chronic financial distress. Heavy and unequal taxation, which fell almost exclusively on the lower classes, caused widespread discontent against the government. The administration and the judicature, largely owing to the system of

purchase, were hopelessly corrupt. The nobility were by rigid tradition excluded from all professions save the army and the church. To engage in industry and agriculture was a mark of social inferiority. Three noble factions, the Bourbons, the Montmorencies and the Guises, were already fighting to control the state on the death of Henry II, whose four sons were young, weak in physique and of small intellectual attainments. It was into a world of conflict and chaos that Henry of Navarre was born on the 14th December, 1553.

CHAPTER II

LE BÉARNAIS

HENRY IV was born Prince of Navarre, and it seemed almost impossible that he should ever aspire to the throne of France. Succession to the throne could only be traced through males, and it was only by tracing his pedigree back through twelve generations to Robert de Clermont, the sixth son of Louis IX, that Henry of Navarre could claim to succeed the Valois. Henry II was a strong and healthy man, but before the Prince of Navarre's sixth birthday he had met a most unexpected end. In July, 1559, he was mortally wounded by a chance thrust of Montgomery's lance during a joust held in celebration of the marriage of his daughter Elizabeth to Philip II of Spain. That thrust was, strangely enough, never forgiven by Queen Catherine de' Medici. Married at the age of fourteen in 1533, she had for nearly twenty years been systematically neglected by her husband, who had lavished all his affection upon the plain but evidently intriguing Diane of Poitiers, a woman old enough to be Catherine's mother. However, Catherine had borne the King ten children, of whom seven survived infancy. There were four sons, all young and unmarried, and in 1553 it looked as if only a miracle would call the Prince of Navarre to the throne of France.

Navarre had once been a prosperous and considerable kingdom extending on both sides of the western Pyrenees, but during the first half of the sixteenth century Ferdinand of Aragon had conquered the Spanish portion, and subsequently the Kings of Navarre had to derive most of their strength from the rich country of Foix and from Béarn, the French lands of the House of Albret, rather than from the strip of Navarre which was left to them. Henry, King of Navarre, grandfather of Henry IV of France, had married Margaret, sister of Francis I. The marriage had not been a success. Henry was illiterate. Margaret was one of the finest scholars of her time. Henry was jovial, licentious and completely superficial; Margaret was a mystic, a romantic, a woman who believed in extremes. Their only surviving child was a daughter, Jeanne, the mother of Henry IV, who, because the Salic law had no application in Navarre, became Queen in her own right. She was a woman of immense strength of character and of awe-inspiring rectitude. In 1556 Theodore de Bèze came from Geneva to the court of Navarre to expound the "new religion." Jeanne listened with closest interest, but refused to be carried away, as was her husband. It was not until four years had passed that she formally abjured Catholicism and embraced Calvinism. Thenceforward there was no more convinced or unselfish Huguenot. She was of the type that makes martyrs.

Her marriage was no more satisfactory than that of her parents. She married Antoine de Bourbon, first prince of the blood royal of France. She could not have chosen a character more unlike her own. He was weak and inconstant, a lover of flattery, an

easy dupe of diplomats, but withal possessed of immense personal courage. Such was the stock of which Henry IV was born. Some writers have attributed the conflicting tendencies of his character to the fact that he had eight wet-nurses. It is less fanciful to trace his inconsistencies to his ancestry.

Henry was born at Pau on the 14th December, 1553. Jeanne had only just arrived at the castle from Compiègne, where she had left her husband, who was governor of Picardy. Her father wanted his grandchild to be born in Béarn. Jeanne was constantly worried about the amorous adventures of the King, her father. In her view he was too much of a "*bon compagnon, bon mesnager, familier à son peuple, fort rieur et gosseur*." Besides, she feared that in his will he might remember his ladies more generously than his family. Jeanne had asked him to give her custody of that document which for the moment happened to be orthodox. "You shall have it," replied the King, "if you will give me in exchange a lusty grandson and sing when he first sees the light, for I want no whimpering, puling baby." The remark must have struck home, because Jeanne had been singularly unfortunate with her earlier children. The eldest had whimpered itself to death because his nurse had kept him in too hot a room and swathed in too many layers of wool. The second had died from a fall which had occurred when his nurse had been amusing herself by throwing him in and out of a window to a gentleman who was in the garden outside. The King wanted no more mistakes.

So Jeanne gallantly sang "a plaintive little tune" :

"Notre dame du bout du pont
Aidez-moi à cette heure, . . ."

till she could sing no more. Her father took the newborn child and gave his daughter his will. Thereupon he put a clove of garlic to the child's lips and gave him a sip of Jurançon wine. His grandson was to be a man, not an effeminate weakling like the younger princes of the House of Valois. He gave instructions that he was to be brought up *à la béarnaise*, that is to say, "bare footed, bare-headed and often fed with as little discrimination as a peasant boy." Henry survived his Spartan upbringing, though doubtless the discipline was somewhat modified on the death of his grandfather, which happened before he was two years old.

When Henry was only eight years old civil war broke out between the Huguenots, at this stage champions of political reform, and the Catholics, who were still whole-hearted supporters of the monarchy. Antoine de Bourbon, finding no favour at the Court, which was dominated by the deadly rivals of his house—the Guises and the Montmorencies—flirted with Protestantism, hoping to derive benefit for himself from the struggle. In 1556 and 1557 he publicly went to Protestant services. Cardinal Guise and Cardinal Ferrara, however, soon gauged the strength of his devotion to the reformed religion, and Ferrara had little difficulty in winning him back to Catholicism by making the wildest promises. Antoine was to be King of Sardinia ; he was to lead the faithful against the Turks ; his marriage to a heretic would be dissolved ; he would marry Mary Queen of Scots, the young widow of Francis II. He was, in fact, made Lieutenant-Governor of France. His Protestantism vanished like smoke.

Far different was the Huguenotism of Jeanne d'Albret. In 1560 she retired to Béarn, having become a most devoted Protestant. She cut off all relations with her faithless husband. She cannot have been sorry to hear of his death while serving with the Catholic army at the siege of Rouen in November, 1562.

Meanwhile young Henry was still nominally a Catholic. A year before his father's death he had been sent to the College of Navarre in Paris, and there he remained after his mother's withdrawal to the south. At the University he was in constant contact both with Henry of Anjou (afterwards Henry III) and with Henry of Guise, who was later to be his most vindictive enemy. The political events of the time, important though they were, did not affect Henry. The amazingly tolerant edict of January, 1562, made no difference to a prince who was not yet a Protestant, nor did he notice the subsequent violations of that treaty. What interested him far more was the royal progress throughout France upon which the Queen Mother set out from Fontainebleau in the spring of 1564. It was on this journey that Catherine at last realised the weakness of the Huguenot party. Two years before she had been inclined to believe that the reformed religion might in time become the religion of France. Herself incapable of deep religious feeling, she had encouraged her children to sing the psalms in French and had permitted her ladies to adopt, half in jest but half in seriousness, "the language of Canaan." For the moment young Henry of Anjou appeared warmly to support the new religion, as he was again to do later for an equally brief spell. Princess Margaret, however, was precociously

obstinate in her Catholicism. Henceforth the Queen Mother abandoned all thought of adopting Protestantism. The policy of toleration advocated by the Chancellor Michel de l'Hôpital had manifestly failed. It outraged the susceptibilities of great lord and bourgeois alike. The colloquy of Poissy had shown that comprehension was impossible. Thirty years of war were necessary to show that toleration was essential.

When Catherine and her fourteen year old son, Charles IX, reached Béarn she had a rather frigid interview with Jeanne, who asked that her son might be returned to her. Her request was granted, as Catherine was hopeful of maintaining the peace by being gracious and accommodating to both parties alike. Henry, at the age of twelve, was an attractive lad. A magistrate who was present at the interview remarked that "he had all the qualities of an adult. He is agreeable, civil and obliging. He gets on so well that there is always a crowd around him." He was not ignorant of Calvinism, as even on the progress with the Court of Charles IX he had been accompanied by his Protestant tutor, La Gaucherie, who had been sent to him in Paris by his mother after the death of Antoine. Now, however, he was formally admitted into the Protestant Church and taught to take his place as chief of the Huguenot faction to which his birth entitled him. He was taught to fight for freedom and reform and to rescue the King from the hands of evil counsellors. The Protestants in France began, as they also finished, theoretical supports of legitimacy.

The leader of the Protestant cause at this time was Louis de Condé, a younger brother of Antoine de Bourbon. His aim was to get possession of the young

king Charles IX and to separate him from his Catholic counsellors. His vain attempt to effect his object at Meaux led to the outbreak of the second civil war. This war was of short duration. A third party, later known as the Politiques, who desired peace at any price, was increasing in strength. All Frenchmen of whatever party were alarmed at the presence of so many foreign soldiers in France—Catholic Swiss, Calvinists led by John Casimir of the Palatinate and Lutherans from Saxony. Moreover, the discontent of the Netherlands against the Spanish Government was seething. Alva was on his way north to start an orgy of repression. Both sides consented to the mutually unsatisfactory terms of the peace of Longjumeau (1568).

In the following months Catholic attacks on Condé and his colleague, the Admiral Coligny, so alarmed the Protestants that they began to concentrate their forces in the south-west. The leaders retired from Paris to La Rochelle, where they were joined by Jeanne d'Albret and her son. In November Henry of Anjou, the younger brother of the King and now Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, set out from Paris accompanied by Tavannes and Biron, experienced generals who could be trusted to surrender to their royal superior the credit of their own military exploits. It was in the following campaign that Henry of Navarre gained his first military experience. He was not impressed by the Huguenot leadership. At Jarnac the royalists inflicted a crushing defeat, the effect of which was intensified by the cold-blooded murder of Condé, who had been compelled to surrender, by Montesquiou, the captain of Anjou's guard. Henry thereupon became the commander-in-chief

of the Huguenots at the age of fifteen. With him was associated his cousin Henry, the eldest son of Louis de Condé, but the real leadership was in the hands of the noble-minded but militarily unsuccessful Coligny. A few months after Jarnac the Huguenots were again defeated, this time at Moncontour, where their failure was due to a precipitate retreat, a manœuvre which would have saved them at Jarnac.

Military defeats served only to harden Huguenot resolution, whereas Anjou was so elated that he allowed the fruits of victory to be snatched from him. The campaign of 1570 went well for the Protestants. La Noue, a soldier famed for his loyalty and for the iron hook which he wore after losing his right hand in battle, was successful near La Rochelle. Henry, commanding an army for the first time, won a skirmish at Arnay-le-duc in Burgundy. Years later he described his experience thus : " I had to decide whether to fight or retreat. . . . I remained . . . fighting thus, I ran a tremendous risk of being captured or killed. . . . I had no artillery and the royalists had. Ten yards away from me a man was killed by a ball from a culverin ; but trusting in God we won through to victory." His boldness made him popular. Henry of Navarre never avoided risks. He thrived on them.

The royalists were growing tired of war. Catherine de' Medici always thought she could win a greater advantage from a good marriage than from a great victory. She had hoped to marry one of her daughters to Philip of Spain, who in 1568 had been left a widower by the death of Elizabeth, Catherine's eldest daughter. By fighting the Huguenots she had hoped to prove her orthodoxy and the eligibility of

her second daughter for the most Catholic King. He had disappointed her by marrying Anne of Austria and he had also prevented the possibility of a Franco-Portuguese marriage alliance. But there were other possible matches for her children. Anjou unreasonably refused to consider her suggestion that he should marry Elizabeth of England, but Alençon, her youngest son, would do equally well. True he was short, fat, and terribly pitted by smallpox, and quite twenty-two years younger than Elizabeth, but what were these considerations to the possibility of her son becoming King of England? Together, France and England might become masters of the Netherlands and conquerors of Philip II at his weakest point. Moreover, a national campaign against Spain might put an end to civil dissensions in France. Finally, she was growing tired of the insufferable domination of the Guises. The old duke had been murdered by the Huguenot Poltrot in February, 1563, and the resulting popularity of the family had been enhanced by the attractive personality of the young duke, Henry. Catherine, for ever intriguing, was resolved to free herself from the House of Lorraine. Her final decision was taken when she discovered the *liaison* which had existed for nearly three years between Henry of Guise and her daughter Margaret. Their intimacy was no surprise to her, but she was outraged by the suggestion that the *liaison* should be converted into marriage. To displace the Guises she would even call in the Huguenots.

Charles IX loved the Guise family even less than his mother. Moreover, he was jealous of his brother's exaggerated successes in the field. As usual, he fell in with her views. Though possessed of considerable

ability, he was a prey to nervous depression which at times came near to madness. He found relief from his pent-up emotions only in the chase. Politics he left to his mother. As L'Hôpital said two years later : "He had no power whatever and dared not ever speak his mind or give utterance to his real thoughts." Negotiations with the Huguenots were begun on Catherine's initiative. In vain did Pius V thunder : "Know ye not that between Satan and the sons of light there can be no fellowship?" Peace was concluded on the 8th August, 1570, at St. Germain. The demands of the Protestants, who lost the war, were satisfied. Coligny the rebel was called upon to direct the policy of France.

II

Coligny was now the first man in France. In a few months' time Catherine was to realise that the peace which she had desired so much entailed her own abdication. The Admiral's personality was magnetic. It captured Charles IX, who had longed to find someone whom he could trust. His mother taught him to love no one, to trust no one and to respect no one. His upbringing is the key to his misery. He was not naturally bad. If Coligny's influence had endured he would have retained his sanity. As it was, the only person he ever loved was his mistress, Marie Touchet, who was not worthy. Despite Catholic protests a meeting took place between the King and the Admiral. Aubigné, the faithful friend of Henry of Navarre, reports that Charles, after warmly embracing his former enemy, laughingly remarked : "My father,

now we have got you, you will not escape from us again." He did not.

The Admiral was a man of vast energy and immense enthusiasm. He was almost the only man of his time with an unblemished moral reputation. A convinced Huguenot, his aim was to turn the interest of all Frenchmen away from their differences and to lead a national crusade to support the persecuted Netherlands against the tyrant of Spain. The idea fascinated Charles IX. He was intrigued by Coligny's plans of founding a New France in the New World. It was true that the settlement of a few Frenchmen in Brazil in 1555, which had been inspired by Coligny, came to nothing, but a new expedition with more money and official backing would undoubtedly deserve a better fate. Charles surrendered himself entirely to his new friend.

They entered Paris together on the 16th December, 1571. Already Coligny was planning to give his idea of national unity a tangible expression by marrying Henry of Navarre to Margaret of Valois, Charles's youngest sister. True, there were many obstacles in the way. The Pope was certain to make difficulties. Jeanne d'Albret was resolutely averse to the project. She hated the corruption of the Valois court. She did not want her son to become a libertine like his father and grandfather. Since the peace was made she had kept him occupied in the south, as far as she could out of the way of the professional beauties of the court, the *escadron volant*, whose duty it was to report the confidences of their lovers to the Queen Mother. Margaret, too, hated the idea of such a marriage. She was eighteen months older than Henry, extremely clever and sophisticated. She

knew Latin and Greek thoroughly. Her memoirs bear testimony to her clear and polished style. She appreciated the arts. The idea of a marriage with the little half-peasant, half-brigand heretic prince of Navarre was abhorrent to her. Besides, she was still in love with Henry of Guise. True he did not reciprocate her passion fully, having renounced her without a protest, and having willingly acquiesced in the King's suggestion that he should marry Catherine of Cleves, widow of the Prince de Porcien. However, Charles and Coligny took no notice of such considerations. The marriage contract was signed on the 11th April, 1572, even though the Pope had given no consent to the marriage of a Catholic princess to a heretic prince. Eighteen days later a treaty with England was signed. At last it seemed that the Virgin Queen was really going to marry her incongruous suitor.

Everything seemed to be favouring Coligny. Catherine had consented to the marriage largely because she thought that the Protestant opposition would become enervated if its leader became a royalist. England at last seemed to be taking a definite step. La Noue had already joined Louis of Nassau in the Netherlands. The policy of the Politiques—for such Coligny had now become—was made easier by the sudden death of Jeanne d'Albret on the 9th June, 1572. Coligny suffered thereby a great personal loss, for the two had long worked together in harmony; but when she had gone it was easier for him to put the nation before religion. Henry of Navarre came northwards utterly desolated by his loss. He was inclined to believe the story which was then current that she had been poisoned by a pair

of perfumed gloves which had been given to her by one René at the instigation of Catherine de' Medici. There does not seem to be any ground for believing the tale, and she almost certainly died of lung trouble, which had long been causing her pain and anxiety ; but in the sixteenth century it was not fashionable for the great to die a natural death.

Preparations for the marriage were hurried on. Huguenots flocked to Paris. Coligny was supreme. The court appeared to accept him. At Blois in the previous September Elizabeth of Austria, Charles IX's sixteen year old wife, had been the only one to repel his homage, but the Queen counted for nothing in the presence of the Queen Mother. La Noue and Nassau had captured the great citadel of Mons, and were besieging Valenciennes. Catherine, however, was becoming uneasy because she was losing her influence over the King. Anjou was already jealous of the military exploits of another, and of the ascendancy of the Protestant Admiral.

The marriage was fixed for the 17th August. The procession was magnificent. Henry had laid aside his mourning. He could never be handsome, but he was strong and healthy, brown as a berry, with a hooked nose and lively dark eyes. He was so grandly dressed that the companions of his youth would not have recognised him. He wore, we are told, a mantle of black velvet, doublet and hose of light brown and white silk with jets and trimmings of gold, a pantalon of white silk with gold embroidery, a black velvet hat with a white plume, white shoes and gloves ornamented with seed pearls and gold. Margaret was no less magnificent, but her face was sulky. She did not want to marry any one so uncouth—not that

marriage would prevent her, "*la regina delle putane*" as she was rudely called, from taking her pleasures where she liked, but she had hoped for a romantic, or at least a brilliant marriage. Here she was being thrown away on the King of a few barren mountains. She was undeniably beautiful. Even Jeanne d'Albret had admitted "that her figure is good, but," she added, "she compresses it extremely. As to her face, it is so made-up that it angers me, for she will certainly spoil it." That prophecy was in due course fulfilled, but not before Margot had had her fill of adventures. It is at least doubtful whether her excessive make-up was due entirely to natural vanity. More charitable historians assert that her skin suffered from erysipelas, and the inflammation required a constant wash. However that may be, all her contemporaries acknowledged her beauty, although Brantôme records that "her hair being black, she took to wearing the most elegant wigs."

Margaret's wedding dress outdid Henry's. "Her circlet and stomacher were of spotted ermine, her dress was cloth of silver with pearls opening over a richly-jewelled satin petticoat. She had a blue velvet mantle embroidered in gold, a train four ells in length, borne by three princesses." She wore the Crown jewels of France which, incidentally, were then comparatively few in number and poor in quality.

The procession made its way slowly to Notre Dame. King Charles was in the best of spirits, sane and more independent than he was ever to be again. He was almost certain that his brother Anjou, whom his mother loved more than all her children, would very soon be elected King of Poland, and then he would be truly free. In front of the cathedral a platform

had been erected, covered with cloth of gold, on which was an altar. Here Cardinal Bourbon, Henry's uncle, was to perform the ceremony. The Huguenots would thus avoid entering a Popish church. When the time came for Margaret to make her responses she remained obstinately silent. The King himself answered for her. When the service was over, the Catholics heard mass in the church while the Huguenots showed off their fine clothes to the appreciative crowds.

There followed three days of extravagant festivities, in which Anjou and Margaret contrived to make Henry seem ridiculous. In one of the pageants the King and his brothers, dressed as knights errant, defended what appeared to be the gates of Paradise against Henry and his friends, who were ultimately thrown backwards into a luridly painted representation of hell.

While the Court was giving itself up to rejoicing the Queen Mother and her son Anjou were becoming more and more worried about the turn of events in Europe and the security of their own position in France. Catherine's character was dominated by lust for power—for power in the State—but, above all, for power over her children. Coligny and his policy were ousting her from both these spheres. She had always tried to avoid war because it meant that control must pass from a woman to a man. War was tolerable when the military glory went to her beloved Anjou, but now it would be taken by the Admiral and his Protestant friends. Furthermore, Catherine perceived that even if she could resign herself to the prospect, the war might not be successful. Elizabeth was a notoriously slippery ally. The news

from the Netherlands was not satisfactory. La Noue, she heard, had been driven from Valenciennes ; a French detachment under the Count of Genlis had been cut to pieces by Alva's son in an attempt to relieve Mons on the 19th July, and Genlis himself had been taken prisoner. Serious though the political outlook appeared, Catherine was even more alarmed by the change which she saw in Charles IX. For the first time in his life he was taking a more than spasmodic interest in affairs of state. Coligny was inspiring him to be a King. His influence was supplanting hers. Mad with jealousy and already seeing herself relegated to the obscurity in which she had passed her married life, she resolved to get rid of her rival. She knew Coligny was not popular. His single-minded advocacy of a national war had led him to offend many influential nobles. It was not tactful of him to announce to a Catholic court that anyone who was adverse to a war to support heretics was "not a good Frenchman and had the red cross of Castille in his heart." Catherine's plan to stop the war and to re-establish her influence was simple. She would have the Admiral murdered, and she would discredit Guise by making it appear that he was responsible for the crime. Accordingly she revealed such parts of her plan as were necessary to Anjou and to Guise. They were delighted by its neatness and simplicity.

On the morning of the 22nd August, 1572, Coligny was returning to his house in the Rue Béthisy, reading some documents he had just received. Suddenly a shot rang out from an upper window. The ball struck the forefinger of his left hand and lodged in his right arm. By the time his men reached the window the

assassin was gone. The house belonged to a servant of the Duke of Guise. The Admiral was taken to his lodgings and the best surgeon of the day, the Huguenot Ambroise Paré, was summoned. He pronounced the wounds not to be fatal and amputated the finger and removed the ball from the arm. Relieved by the news of their leader's immediate safety, the Huguenots in justifiable anxiety began to concentrate their forces.

Catherine was distraught. What had happened to Maurevert? He was usually most reliable. He made no mistake when he had been told to despatch Mouy, another but less influential Huguenot. Indeed, he was drawing a pension as the official *tueur du roy*. Not only had her plan miscarried but the Huguenots were thoroughly alarmed and would demand a full inquiry. They would accuse Guise, who would be certain to implicate Anjou. Her own part in the plot would become known. Coligny must die, but in the meanwhile she must affect to be duly horrified at the outrage. Accordingly she set off for the Rue Béthisy, accompanied by the King, who was genuinely alarmed by the attempted murder, and by Henry of Anjou, who was as good a dissembler as his mother. They expressed their sympathy to Coligny and promised him justice. Catherine was much disturbed because he insisted on having a few words with the King alone.

Anjou was now resolved on a general massacre of the Huguenots as the only way in which to conceal his crime. Catherine agreed. The idea had often been suggested before, and she thought it would be possible to continue a Politique policy without the Huguenots and without Coligny's war. It was necessary for the King to give his sanction. For

nearly two hours he refused to countenance such a betrayal. Supported by Anjou and Birago, a Milanese, the successor of L'Hôpital in the Chancellorship, the Queen Mother argued with the King, and, with threats and imputations that he was too timid to act, in the end persuaded him. Poor Charles, unused to opposing anyone, at last let his temper get the better of him. "By God's death," he cried, using one of his milder oaths, "since you insist that the Admiral must be killed, I consent; but with him every Huguenot in France must perish, that not one may remain to reproach me with his death, and what you do, see that it be done quickly." That was enough; the plan was rapidly concerted between Catherine, Anjou, Guise and Charron, the Prévôt des Marchands of Paris.

On the night of the 23rd August, 1572, Margaret attended her mother's *coucher*. She knew nothing of the projected massacre, but she was disturbed by the anxiety and tears of her sister Claude, Duchess of Lorraine. The Duchess was at this time twenty-five years old and had been married more than eleven years. She was in tears and entreated her sister not to go to her husband, the King of Navarre, that night. Catherine was furious and commanded Margaret to go at once, and then turned on her elder daughter and rated her for having tried to spoil all. Margaret found her husband suffering from extreme depression. He was distrusted by the Protestants, who suspected the influence of her Catholic embraces. The Catholics regarded him as a heretic and a feeble heretic at that. The attempt on Coligny had awakened him to the insecurity of the Protestant position. He felt he must act, and he discussed what ought to be done with

the twenty or thirty Huguenot gentlemen who were in his room. Then while Henry and Margaret were lying in their bed with the curtains drawn, and while it was decided by the others in the room that Henry should go to the King and accuse Guise, the tocsin rang out from the church of Saint Germain de l'Auxerrois nearby, and the massacre of St. Bartholomew began.

In the Rue de Bethisy Guise and Angoulême, accompanied by a motley throng of armed Germans, Swiss and Frenchmen, had arrived at the Admiral's house. One Besme went into the Admiral's room where he found him alone. Without more ado he killed him, and threw the bleeding corpse out of the window to his noble friends in the courtyard below. The mob was loose ; it took the body and hacked it to pieces. Well over a thousand Huguenots were butchered in cold blood. Some estimates put the victims in Paris at five times that number. Among them were Teligny, the Admiral's gallant son-in-law, and La Rochefoucauld, the greatest magnate of Poitou. Young Rosny, always a keen Protestant, was at the college of Burgundy. Putting on his gown, and ostentatiously carrying a breviary, he went through the streets and found refuge in the Louvre itself.

Meanwhile Henry and Margaret, though ignorant of the massacre that was going on outside, were unable to sleep. At dawn, Henry could stand it no longer. He got up and went to play tennis to pass the time until he could visit the King and demand justice for Coligny against Guise and his uncle, the Cardinal. Margaret fell into a fitful sleep only to be awakened by a loud knocking at

the door. Thinking her husband had returned she told one of her ladies to open it. In rushed a wounded Huguenot whom she had never seen before, pursued by four archers. He threw himself on her, holding on to her madly. Together they fell between the bed head and the wall. Trembling with fear and covered with blood she remained there till Monsieur de Nançay, the captain of the King's Guard, entered and saved them both. He could not suppress a smile at the amazing spectacle she presented. Margaret, almost beside herself with fear, fled to the apartments of her sister Claude, but on the way she saw a Huguenot noble struck dead, within three paces of her.

Henry and Condé were taken before Charles IX, who seems to have behaved like a homicidal maniac. They were curtly ordered to choose between death and the mass. They were then removed and kept strictly guarded, but not before they had witnessed in the company of the King and the Queen Mother the burning in effigy of Coligny. The King had to content himself with seeing his friend burnt only in effigy, because some thoughtless fellows had thrown most of the Admiral's dismembered limbs into the river whence it was impossible to recover them.

It was more than two months before Henry abjured the Protestant faith. He realised that further resistance was impossible. He had only lived through the night of St. Bartholomew because Catherine had thought that, being made amenable by terror, he might be a useful make-weight against Guise.

The Paris massacre had been emulated throughout France. At least ten thousand people perished, including almost all the Huguenot nobles. Spain and

the Pope were overjoyed. A solemn *Te Deum*, specially composed by Palestrina, was sung at St. Peter's. Gregory XIII ratified the marriage between Henry and Margaret. The heretics had been overthrown.

III

For the next few years the life of Henry and the history of Huguenotism are unconnected. For nearly four years Henry was to be the prisoner of Catherine de'Medici. The Huguenot party, shorn of its natural leaders, was forced to reorganise itself. Hitherto the party had been dominated by the nobility, who, distrusting democratic doctrines, had asserted that they were not fighting against the crown, but for the removal of foreign and unpopular ministers, while the third estate had limited its demand to an extension of the powers of the States-General. Now, however, many of the greater nobility had fallen, and many had abjured their faith. The importance of the bourgeoisie and of the ministers had consequently increased, and under their influence republican ideas became more prominent ; while the feudal element, which was still represented by the smaller local nobility, went to strengthen separatist tendencies. The change was indicated by the appearance of a number of political pamphlets, of which the most notable were the *Franco-Gallia* of Hotman, and the *Vindiciæ contra Tyrannos*, which has often been attributed to Henry's faithful friend and adviser, Duplessis-Mornay.

Meanwhile the survivors of the massacre had taken

up arms, but their resistance was confined to a few cities of which Nîmes and Montauban, in the south, and La Rochelle, in the west, were the most important. Anjou was determined to take La Rochelle, and accompanied by the whole court he invested the city. This time, however, there was no Tavannes to help him to win glory. The siege cost hundreds of lives, and was a complete failure. Henry of Navarre, who appeared to be unnecessarily gay and inconsequent, must have been secretly delighted when it was decided to make peace. An excuse was found when it was learnt that ambassadors were coming from Poland to offer the crown of that country to Anjou. By the Treaty of La Rochelle, signed on the 24th June, 1573, the Huguenots were promised "liberty of conscience" and the right of holding services in La Rochelle, Nîmes and Montauban. In addition, the Protestants recovered their sequestered estates, offices and honours. In September, Charles IX, in one of his periodical rages, ordered his brother to go to Poland despite his manifest unwillingness. The country settled down to a few months of uneasy peace.

The Huguenots were still without security, and their demand for complete toleration had not been granted. Furthermore, their cause was greatly strengthened by the rapid rise of the "Politiques"—Catholics, who in the words of Tavannes, "preferred the repose of the kingdom or their own homes to the salvation of their souls; who would rather that the kingdom remained at peace without God, than at war for Him." This party, born of the horror and weariness which the Civil Wars had caused, was anxious to establish peace on the basis

of mutual toleration. Its leaders were the two sons of the old Constable Montmorency—Francis, Governor of Paris, and Henry Damville, Governor of Languedoc, who gradually established an almost autonomous state in the south, where the two creeds were most equally balanced, and where the war had been most severe. They had inherited their jealousy of the Guises from their father, but their ideas of toleration were new. As a whole, the Politiques were not actuated by high principle. If they adopted the views of L'Hôpital it was from indifference to religion, not from conviction as to the merits of toleration. It was to this party that Henry of Navarre always belonged in spirit, if not in name.

Henry's attitude at this time is a disappointment to his admirers. Outwardly, at any rate, he appears to have sunk into the easy ways of the corrupt court. He seems to have been on excellent terms with the young Duke of Guise, though he never could like Alençon, who affected to be a Politique in the hope of securing the crown on the death of Charles IX. Perhaps he feared that the ill-favoured Alençon was aspiring to the position of the leader of the Huguenot opposition. Catherine, however, regarded Henry with contempt. He would never make the effort to escape. He was easy game for her *escadron volant*, and particularly for Mademoiselle Charlotte de Sauves, with whom he professed himself to be violently in love. This lady appears to have been equally intimate with Henry of Navarre, Guise, Alençon, Guast (an intimate friend of Anjou), and even—it was rumoured—with the King. At any rate, the harvest of news derived

from her enormous band of lovers was very acceptable to the Queen Mother. Charlotte genuinely loved one man, and one only—Henry of Guise. In 1588 he was to sleep his last night on earth in her arms.

Early in 1574 Henry of Navarre, inspired by Condé, did plan to escape from St. Germain. His effort was half-hearted, and it failed. Henry of Condé, who was a true Huguenot at heart and a man of great courage and energy, effected his escape and negotiated with the German princes for help in the fifth civil war which had broken out in February. Henry of Navarre and Alençon, who still hoped to exclude Anjou from the succession, remained at court. Their natural antipathy was augmented by the extreme intimacy of Margaret and Alençon. It was obvious that she loved her brother better than her husband, and her one desire appeared to be to secure the throne for him. She was planning a *coup d'état* to effect her design with the aid of three young gentlemen of the Court—Coconnas, La Mole and Guitri, all of whom were supposed to be the lovers of this amazingly promiscuous princess. But the plot was doomed to failure chiefly through the lethargy of the conspirators. They were arrested, and La Mole was executed on the 30th April, 1574. Margaret was desolated, but consoled herself with the embraces of another lover, Bussy d'Amboise, who, four years later, was to be assassinated by the jealous husband of another of his ladies.

Such was the atmosphere in which Henry of Navarre lived between the age of eighteen and twenty-two. The worst fears of Jeanne d'Albret were fulfilled. The natural genius of Henry seemed

to be smothered by the corrupt lethargy of the Court. He surrendered himself completely to the charms of the faithless Charlotte de Sauves, though he occasionally found solace in a more amenable mistress, La Cayelle, a fascinating and dusky Cypriot. His wife despised him. Her innumerable amours brought shame on him. Her attachment to Alençon was said to be too intimate to be decent. Henry appeared to be soft. Aubigné, his faithful friend and a strong Huguenot, who was with him throughout his captivity, tells us that at times he was acutely conscious of his position and of his duty to escape to rally the oppressed Huguenots. Most of the time, however, he appears to have been enervated, sapped of vitality by the Queen Mother, who dominated the Court. Catherine had never been beautiful; her eyes were prominent, her lips projecting. In middle and later life she was enormously fat. To correct this tendency she took constant exercise on foot, tiring out all her suite. "Constant movement," wrote the Venetian, Lippomano, "gives her a good appetite, and if she takes exercise enough for two, she eats in proportion." Hence she suffered much from indigestion and, as time went on, from gout. At her meals she loved incessant chatter, and indulged in immoderate laughter, enjoying especially the libels on herself. She liked new fashions, and was full of ideas for devising new entertainments, which were very welcome in an age before reading had become general, and before the theatre had emerged from its medieval tradition. She was the first Queen of France to ride side-saddle which, according to Antoine Varillas, who was, it is true, born thirty-five years after her

death, was "not for ease but to show the fine *tournure* of her ankles, with their perfectly fitting silk stockings which she delighted in wearing." Devoid of all deep feeling save desire to control and advance her children, she could not understand the strength of other peoples' convictions. Her one aim was power. Oddly enough, Henry of Navarre had much in common with her. He was always her most generous apologist. He put this question to one of her critics: "What could a poor woman have done, with her husband dead and five small children upon her hands, and two families who were scheming to seize the throne—our own and the Guises? I am astonished she did not do even worse." Yet Henry avoided her errors, and became the most popular instead of the most hated of sovereigns, because he could—and did—appreciate the convictions and predilections of others. He could be equally ungrateful and rapacious, but he had nothing of the Florentine's cold-blooded treachery and calculated baseness. He had charm and genuine humanity; she had neither.

The King had become more and more unbalanced since the massacre of St. Bartholomew. He suffered from fits of overwhelming remorse. He had strange hallucinations. Sometimes he imagined his room to be full of mangled corpses; sometimes of flights of obscene birds. In May, 1574, he died at Vincennes, vomiting so much blood that his bed was almost saturated.

Catherine at once took steps to be made regent. She produced letters patent signed by Charles IX and alleged to have been given with the concurrence of Navarre and Alençon. She sent Chemerault to

Poland to tell Anjou (now Henry III) to return to France with all possible speed. He was delighted to leave Poland, which he did at once without consulting anyone, thereby increasing his already great unpopularity. He did not, however, appear to be in any hurry to return to France. Warned by his mother to avoid North Germany, since "the German princes had too many causes of quarrel with France," he passed through Austria and Italy. At Venice he wasted two months in luxury and debauch, and is said to have been corrupted by the licence of that city. At any rate, from the time he became King he no longer appears as a ruthless soldier—if, indeed, he had ever done more than pose as such. Henceforth he behaved more like a woman than a man.

Henry III was at once the most repellant and the most pathetic of the cursed house of Valois. He was far more able than his brothers. He hoped to create a truly national party by creating a new nobility dependent on, and therefore loyal to, the monarchy alone. Some of his favourites were men of some capacity such as Epernon and Joyeuse. Others, like François d'O and Villequier, were debauchees of the worst type. In the public mind all were classed together as the King's "*mignons de couchette*." Henry and his mignons wore their hair long, and artificially waved. They wore little velvet caps and long gowns, like women. At the ballet the King actually wore a woman's dress. Almost invariably he had a low-necked tunic with a necklace of pearls. His nightly toilet was most elaborate. He was anointed with pomade, and in bed he wore a mask and gloves, apparently in order to preserve the whiteness and softness of his skin.

Sturdy citizens like L'Estoile, who could remember the great days of Francis I, were shocked at the effeminacy of the King and his mignons. "To look at their heads," he wrote, "arising immediately out of their wide, stiffly-starched ruffs, one is reminded of John the Baptist's head on a charger." The King had a passion for keeping pet animals. His rooms were filled with birds, monkeys and squirrels; but, above all, he loved dogs. If one took his fancy in the streets, he ordered it to be stolen there and then. When, in 1584, the deputies of the United Provinces—then almost at the last gasp—came to offer him the sovereignty of their country, they found him with a little basket full of puppies suspended from his neck by a broad green ribbon, which they had perforce to admire before the King would consent to talk business.

Henry III was believed also to be a Satanist, and to have celebrated the Black Mass in the woods near Paris. In 1589, just before his death, there appeared a pamphlet entitled "The Sorceries of Henry of Valois, and the oblations he made to the devil in the wood of Vincennes." These and his more ordinary debaucheries were interspersed with almost ludicrous acts of penance and superstition. When, in September, 1574, he at last reached France, he joined the newly-formed order of Flagellants, whose adherents periodically put on long gowns and hoods which left the back exposed, and at night paraded the streets chanting the *Miserere*, while with a knotted whip each brother flogged the back of the brother whom he followed. Such penance commended itself to the King, who always wore a rosary made of tiny skulls at his waist. Meanwhile

Damville, the leader of the Politiques, whose overtures had been rebuffed by Henry III at Turin, was conferring with the Huguenots at Nîmes, with whom he concluded a definite alliance in December.

It seemed as though the Huguenot war was destined to drag on for ever. On the day after Christmas the King indulged in another orgy of penitence with the Flagellants. This time he persuaded Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine, uncle of Henry of Guise and of Mary Queen of Scots to join him. The unaccustomed exposure on a bitterly cold night was too much for the old man, and he died soon afterwards. His death, however, only served to strengthen the popularity of the young Duke of Guise, already as popular as his father, who had saved France at St. Quentin and had recaptured Calais from the English. He was now about twenty-four years old and very attractive. "He is taller than the King," wrote the Venetian, Lippomano, "and more finely proportioned. His countenance is majestic, his eyes are lively and sparkling, his hair light and curly, his beard of a similar colour. He displays admirable grace in all bodily exercises; as a fencer he has few equals. He is princely in his liberality, but he is said to spend more than he possesses." Despite their conflicting interests and the traditional hostility of their two families, Navarre and Guise got on extremely well together.

In February, 1575, Henry III was crowned at Rheims by the Cardinal of Guise, brother of the Cardinal of Lorraine. The ceremony was unprecedented in that it took place in the evening. This break with tradition was due to nothing more than the fact that Henry's toilet was so elaborate that it

was impossible to complete it before nightfall. The King, though he feared Navarre as a potential enemy, was fond of him, as indeed was everybody except perhaps his wife. He mitigated the strictness with which he was watched. Formerly he had only been allowed to go about the town in a coach, but now he was permitted to do almost anything he liked.

In March the King was seriously ill and seemed likely to die. He sent for Navarre and told him that he was sure he had been poisoned by his brother Alençon, or Anjou, as he had now become. Anjou, he said, was in league with the Huguenots and Damville, who was levying his own taxes and holding his own estates in Languedoc. At the price of promising virtual independence, Anjou had gained the support of the Politiques of the south in his efforts to usurp the throne. The King begged Navarre to kill his brother as soon as he himself was dead. However, he recovered. It is doubtful whether Anjou had ever tried poison. He could get all he wanted if he escaped from the Court.

Anjou effected his escape on the 15th September, 1575. Accompanied by royal guards as usual, he begged them to wait outside a house on the outskirts of Paris where lived a lady with whom he wished a more intimate acquaintance. The guards were familiar with this sort of errand and obligingly agreed, never thinking for a moment that the sly prince would escape from them by another entrance. Anjou rode off to Dreux in his appanage and at once entered into an alliance with the Huguenots.

It had been agreed that Navarre was to follow him, but he seemed to be in no hurry to do so. He hoped, it was said, to become Lieutenant-General, to which

office Anjou's right had been forfeited by his flight. He certainly appeared to be enjoying life, and it is difficult to believe that he was suffering as Hamlet suffered in rather similar circumstances. "The King of Navarre," wrote the English agent Dale to Burleigh in September, "was never so merry nor so much made of." One of the principal causes of his high spirits must have been the success he was having with Charlotte de Sauves now that Anjou had gone and it was impossible for her to make mischief between them. He rarely saw Margaret, who was strictly confined to her apartments owing to her alleged complicity in Anjou's escape. They had separate beds at this time. Henry rarely retired until one or two o'clock in the morning, and with the restless energy which was always characteristic of him, was always up at day-break. The Queen Mother, it is true, did take the precaution of seeing that all Huguenots were removed from his suite—except of course his intimate friend Aubigné, who at this time appeared as weak and frivolous as his master.

Although Navarre's apparent satisfaction with life at Court is surprising, he was not blind to his political position. Henry's delight in whatever he happened to be doing at the moment is misleading. He certainly never intended to remain the puppet prince of Catherine de' Medici's imagination. Yet he could always enjoy life, and he was not certain that the time had come to act. Gradually, however, he began to fear that his place as leader of the Huguenot faction might be taken from him by his cousin Condé, who was already in communication with Anjou, and to prevent such an occurrence he sent St. Martin with a letter announcing his projected escape. This was

planned for the 20th February, 1576, but on the 4th, while he was hunting at Senlis, his hand was forced. During the afternoon Aubigné rode up to Navarre and in his usual sententious manner warned him : " Sire, we are betrayed ; the King knows all. The road to Paris leads to dishonour and death ; that to life and glory is in the opposite direction." To this Henry replied tersely, " There is no need for so many words. Let us be off."

The danger was indeed immediate, for Aubigné had discovered one of their accomplices, Fervaques, " whispering to the King and the King attentive to his speech." Aubigné had at once accused him of treachery, which Fervaques at last admitted, adding, " Go quickly and save your master." There were still two of the King's spies with them. He told them that Aubigné had informed him that the rumour was current that he was about to escape, and to prove its falsity he sent one of them to the Court with a message offering to return. A little later he sent the other off with a second message. So it happened that with but a handful of companions the King of Navarre rode into the frosty night a free man after nearly four years' captivity. He crossed the Seine near Poissy and, on the 6th February, arrived at the Huguenot town of Alençon, whence he went to Saumur on the Loire. There he thanked his friends : " Praise be to God who has delivered me. They killed the Queen my mother in Paris. There too they slew the Admiral and all my best servants and they intended to do the same to me. Never shall I return thither. . . ." He did not return for eighteen years. Then he entered the city in triumph as King of France.

IV

Henry continued southwards. He made a short stay in Guyenne, of which he was hereditary governor, and then rode to Béarn. His plans were always uncertain. He was not yet the statesman he was to become ten years later. He was revelling in his new freedom and his new power. Twenty-three years old, he was of rather less than average height, but strong and healthy, an ardent lover of tennis, hunting and battle. Privations were nothing to him. He was likened to a mountain goat of his native Pyrenees, hardy, restless, bearded ; he even shared its odour. He was not a man of genius but even in these early days his intuition was amazing, and he had always the capacity of putting his projects into execution.

Although Henry attended Huguenot services from the time of his escape, two or three months passed before he formally abjured Catholicism. It is possible that he may have wished not to appear too ready to change his religion at a moment's notice. He had already been twice "converted." He may not have taken to the rigid discipline that was supposed to be associated with Protestantism, though in truth Aubigné and even Sully would have had little in common with such men as Ludlow and Bradshaw. Apart from actual indifference, the probable reason for his delay was Henry's natural desire to attract to his party the "peaceable Catholics" or Politiques.

The position of Henry III was alarming. "Monsieur," as Anjou was known at Court, was flirting with the Politiques and Huguenots. Navarre was stirring up trouble in the south. Condé had induced John Casimir to provide an army of *reiters*,

who were now entering France. Above all he was penniless. He knew, however, that Monsieur had his price and that the Huguenots desired little but peace and toleration. Accordingly in May, after much negotiation, he signed the Treaty of Valéry, better known as the Peace of Monsieur, by which France was divided among the factious princes, and the Huguenots were granted an amazing toleration. Anjou was given Berry, Touraine and Anjou as a perpetual appanage ; Condé received Picardy, and Navarre was confirmed in his governorship of Guyenne. Anjou was for the time satisfied ; at any rate he entirely abandoned his Huguenot allies to whom he had vowed lifelong fidelity. Margaret, who loved him well, was fully aware of his treachery. She once said that if all infidelity vanished from the earth her brother would have no difficulty in refilling it. The Huguenots were granted full liberty of worship throughout France (except Paris) with the consent of the lord within whose jurisdiction the meeting was to be held. They were given eight " towns of security," and the King promised to call the States-General within six months. What pleased Navarre most was the subsequent release of his sixteen year old sister Catherine, who came to Bergerac and became as devout a Protestant as her mother had been.

The peace was immensely unpopular with the great majority. The Catholics felt that they had been betrayed. The popularity of Guise, who let it be thought that he was being persecuted by the timid King, increased enormously. Local Catholic associations or leagues, encouraged by the Jesuits and the Franciscans, appeared everywhere, but most noticeably

in Paris, Picardy and Burgundy. These leagues, the forerunners of the Holy League which was to come within an ace of selling France to the King of Spain, pretended to be formed to counter Protestant excesses, but their real aim as expressed by their leader the Duke of Montpensier, was "to exterminate the Huguenots, to confine the King in a monastery and to place Guise on the throne." Though vocal the leaguers were as yet few in number. To attract the moderates they vainly pretended to be the majority. Their day was yet to come.

The States-General met at Blois on the 6th December, 1576. The Huguenots were already suspicious as the elections had been disgracefully "managed" by the Guise faction. Indeed many had taken place in Catholic churches while Mass was being sung. The three orders at once demanded unity of religion, and Bodin, the famous political theorist, had great difficulty in inducing even the Third Estate, which inevitably suffered most from civil war, to add that unity must be won "without the use of arms and the necessity of war." The declaration was enough for the Huguenots. They retired at once and rallied to Henry of Navarre in Guyenne.

Nor were their fears groundless. Henry III, acutely conscious of his own weakness and terrified by the democratic doctrines now professed by the Guise party, was unwilling to fight alone and unsupported for the cause of toleration. Accordingly, in an effort to supplant Guise as leader of the Catholics, the King permitted the edict of toleration to be repealed and declared himself head of the League. In vain did he seek to make himself popular. The Estates continued to treat him with suspicion, refusing

supplies necessary for the war and bringing forward constitutional demands which made him only too glad to be quit of them.

Meanwhile, Navarre, unused to leadership and inexperienced in politics, found himself in a most difficult position. To counter the League the Huguenots, in February, 1577, entered into an alliance with Sweden, Denmark, England, and some of the German princes—all of them notoriously unreliable allies. Faced by the royal army under Alençon, who had forgotten his recent pledges of perpetual alliance with the Huguenots and disturbed by the prospect of foreign intervention, the Catholics who hitherto had opposed the King were growing alarmed. A deputation was sent to the Huguenot princes at Agen. Condé, whose manners were always abrupt, and who had the rare distinction of being a sincere Protestant, dismissed the deputation with scant courtesy. Damville, who ruled Languedoc almost as a king, was equally curt and dismissed them at once, saying : " God unfortunately has made toleration a necessity." Henry of Navarre was far more courteous, for already he realised that it was only through the support of such moderate Catholics as these that he could attain the throne. He was not altogether insincere when he received them with these words : " Being all good Frenchmen, we must settle our differences amiably and without rancour. Those who faithfully follow their conscience are of my religion, and my religion is that of all who are brave and true." It was only by the victory of such a spirit that France could be delivered from the senseless horrors of civil war.

A desultory war was going on at the time. Henry of Navarre, knowing that time was on his side, tried

to keep it within the smallest possible bounds. He was enjoying life at his own little court at Nérac, and, as usual, his thoughts were full of love and the chase. The Calvinist ministers disapproved of his conduct, but could not help liking him. His spirits were so high, his energy was so untiring and his kindness so all-embracing. He admitted that his ideal life would be to live like a noble in his castle without ceremony of any sort and entirely occupied with having a good time.

In May Damville made his own peace with the Court. In the same month Anjou effected the spectacular but not over-hazardous capture of La Charité on the Loire. At the end of the summer the King and the Huguenots were equally glad to come to terms. The Treaty of Bergerac and the Edict of Poitiers were slightly less favourable to the Huguenots than the Peace of Monsieur, but were more favourable than their successes in the war had warranted. The wretched King wanted peace to escape from the thralldom of the Duke of Guise. Anjou already foresaw the possibility of winning the throne of the Netherlands for himself.

France settled down to some months of uneasy peace, during which those nobles, who became too conscious of their own strength and the weakness of their neighbours, diverted themselves with pillaging expeditions or with stealing towns from those of the opposite religion. Chief among the offenders were the Catholic Biron and Damville, who by the death of his brother had now become the Duke of Montmorency and Marshal of France. The King was attempting to form a royalist party by lavishing renewed favours on his *mignons*, but most of them

were quite contemptible. Quélus was killed in a brawl with Maugiron, and another favourite, St. Mesgrin, was brutally murdered by agents of the Duke of Guise. The murderers went unpunished, but the King accorded to his favourites funerals of a magnificence hitherto reserved for members of the royal family.

Henry of Navarre was never less a hero. True religion he had none. He showed himself to be no statesman; nor did he even follow the dictates of expediency, for had he remained a Catholic the civil war might well have ended. Alliance with Damville's party of moderate Catholics was the key to success. This Catherine de' Medici fully appreciated, and she used every effort to win him to her side. On the other hand the Huguenots injudiciously threatened him, accusing him both of religious favouritism and political absolutism, so much so that in the war which had just ended he had been for the moment on the royalist side. For the time being Henry abandoned all pretence of principle. Personal considerations took the place of religious zeal. Henry and Condé were too jealous to act in concert, and the stricter Huguenots looked to the latter as their leader, suspecting, not without reason, the genuineness and permanence of Henry's re-conversion. Many others believed that a very tolerable *modus vivendi* had been disturbed by the intrusion of the Princes of the Blood, and considered Damville their constitutional leader, Catholic as he was. There were signs that the religious parties would give place to fresh combinations based on personal or constitutional affinities. The gallant Huguenot, La Noue, proposed that all mention of religious differences should be dropped,

and that Huguenots and Catholics should combine in an attack upon the abuses of the royal administration. His arguments were weightier in that a social conflict between the peasants and the gentry was threatening many parts of France and especially the province of Dauphiné.

Henry seemed unable to appreciate the gravity of the situation. Released at last from a more or less severe captivity, he was enjoying life in the south. He was, as usual, short of money, and was persistently asking the King for Margaret's promised dowry, Quercy, of which the rich city of Cahors was the capital. These requests were countered by a demand that the Huguenots should surrender the places of security which, under the Treaty of Bergerac, they had been granted for a period of six months, but which they were loath to surrender, as the terms of the treaty had not been properly observed in any part of France. Catherine herself was celebrating the unaccustomed peace by persistently stealing Protestant towns. In August a conference was arranged between Henry and the Queen Mother. Henry continually postponed the meeting, but he eventually received his mother-in-law at Nérac. She found him gay and irresponsible but infinitely elusive. Magnificent festivities were prepared in her honour and in that of Margaret, who accompanied her mother. For the first time mass was permitted at the Protestant Court.

As usual, Catherine brought her *escadron volant* with her in the hope that their blandishments might implement her diplomacy. There was a new recruit since Henry had left Paris—Mademoiselle Françoise de Montmorency Fosseux, generally known as La Fosseuse, who was then aged fourteen. Henry fell

violently in love with her. The whole Court was speculating on the effect this would have on his wife, who, after more than two years, had returned to him. Margaret, however, was in no way put out, and found ample consolation in the attentions of the handsome Vicomte de Turenne, one of the leading Huguenot nobles.

Even during the conference the pleasant pastime of town stealing continued. Owing to the governor's treachery the Catholics were able to capture La Réole, one of the towns that had been pledged to the Huguenots. The news reached Henry during a ball given at Auch in honour of the Queen Mother. Calling Turenne and Rosny aside, he set out at once with a few followers and before morning captured the little Catholic town of Fleurance. They returned to the ball and continued to dance as though nothing had happened. This sort of exploit appealed to the Queen Mother, who had developed a sneaking admiration for her son-in-law. When she heard of the fall of Fleurance she smiled and said : " It is his revenge for La Réole ; cabbage for cabbage, but mine has the better heart."

Eventually agreement was reached, on the whole satisfactory to the Huguenots in that they were given several important towns in Guyenne and Languedoc for a further period of six months. Catherine returned to Paris and, in the words of Rosny's secretary, " the King and Queen of Navarre and the King's sister retired to Nérac " and then to Pau " where the Court had a delightfully pleasant time, for there was no talk save of love and the resulting pleasures and pastimes in which you (Rosny) joined as much as possible, having a mistress like the

others." While at Pau Margaret was allowed to attend mass in a chapel three or four yards long which could hold no more than seven or eight people. The Huguenot officers were careful to see that the drawbridge of the château was raised at the time of the service, and on one occasion a number of Catholic townsmen were severely beaten and imprisoned for trying to hear a Catholic service in a Protestant country.

Catherine had departed without having handed over Margaret's dowry, and the question remained a bone of contention between the two courts. The armed gallants at Nérac were anxious to show their military prowess. Neither the Catholic Biron nor Damville observed the terms of the peace, and the miserable King was spasmodically indignant at the disorder of the Kingdom and the independence of the Court of Navarre. In February, 1580, what is generally known as the Lovers' War broke out. Historians have always had difficulty in finding adequate causes for its outbreak. La Noue of the iron hand disapproved of it. The Politiques insisted on holding aloof. The sincerely Protestant inhabitants of La Rochelle and the southern towns would have nothing to do with what they regarded as a godless war. The immediate cause is said to have been furnished by Henry III's attempted interference with Margaret's amorous adventures. The King accused her before her husband of an intrigue with Turenne. Henry of Navarre affected to disbelieve the all too probable story, and declared war on the King to avenge the affront. He took the precaution, however, of publishing a stirring declaration—presumably not written by himself—showing forth the

wrongs of the long-suffering Huguenots. The Huguenots themselves preferred to suffer rather than to fight for a godless leader.

The royalists, led by Biron, Mayenne and Matignon, far outnumbered Henry's forces. No support was coming from the rank and file of the Huguenots. Indeed Mayenne, brother of the Duke of Guise, was urging the Baron de Salignac to use his influence to get them to join the League, one of the objects of which was to depose the Valois and exclude the Bourbons. Henry, however, was anxious to show off his military prowess not only to La Fosseuse but also to two others of his wife's suite—Mademoiselle Fayette and Mademoiselle Rebours. It was suggested to him that as the King would not surrender Cahors, he should take it by force. Accordingly, in the midst of a thunderstorm, a hole was blown in the principal gate by means of a petard, and an entry was made into the town. Cahors is surrounded on three sides by the River Lot; the streets are steep and narrow, and in those days every house could be defended like a fort. It was only after five days and nights of desperate street fighting at the hottest time of the year that the town surrendered. Henry's reputation as a soldier was made. It was a marvellous feat of courage, audacity and endurance. Rosny (later the Duke of Sully) fought throughout by the side of his master. He was not without his reward, for it is recorded in his memoirs that "by the best good luck in the world he found a little box containing 4,000 gold crowns."

With the approach of winter the war came to an end, and on the 26th November, 1580, peace was signed at Fleix. The royalists were anxious for

peace, so that Anjou might be free to prosecute his designs in the Netherlands. In September the Dutch, despairing of winning their independence without foreign aid, had offered him the sovereignty of the Netherlands. Catherine warmly supported the plan as a revenge for Philip II's recent occupation of Portugal. Anjou accordingly set about preparing an army. Many patriotic Protestants, including Turenne and La Noue were among the recruits. Before the end of the year Artois was annexed by France, and in August, 1581, Cambrai was recaptured from the Duke of Parma. Margaret, devoted as ever to her brother, was overjoyed at his success. She regarded the expedition as the result of her own intrigues.

Her relations with her husband remained peculiar. Each, to the knowledge of the other, engaged in continuous amorous adventures. They seldom quarrelled. Margaret was, perhaps, grateful to Henry for resisting the constant pressure of Spanish agents to renew the war in order to frustrate Anjou in the Netherlands. She knew that La Fosseuse was expecting a child by Henry. One day a doctor entered the royal bed-chamber. He told Henry that La Fosseuse was near her time. Navarre was beside himself with anxiety and, after visiting his mistress, he returned to his wife. "My dear," said he, "I have kept from you something I ought to have told you. I beg you to excuse me and to forget all I have already told you about it. But do me this great service, and get up at once and go and help poor Fosseuse, who is in a very bad way. I am sure you will not resent what has happened when you see her so ill. You know how much I love her, and I beg you to oblige me in this."

Henry's was indeed an extraordinary nature, quite without jealousy and quite without tact. Strange to relate, Margaret did as she was asked. So little had Henry considered his mistress's condition or the need for secrecy, that she found Fosseuse in a room where slept all the royal maids of honour. Soon afterwards the poor girl was delivered of a still-born daughter. Henry was much annoyed that his wife refused to continue her visits to his mistress. But she was much occupied with Harlay de Champvallon, whom she called "le soleil de son âme."

In February, 1582, Margaret, accompanied by La Fosseuse, returned to her mother. She found her brother, the King, pathetically attempting to create a purely royalist party devoted to himself, which should serve to counteract Anjou, Guise and Navarre alike. The men of his choice were unworthy in addition to being unpopular. Joyeuse was made a duke and peer of France, with precedence over all save princes of the blood and foreign royalty. He was married to Margaret of Lorraine, a niece of the Queen. The King's other favourite, La Valette, who suffered from the disadvantage of being a grandson of a notary, was given precedence immediately after Joyeuse. In addition he was made Duke of Epernon and betrothed to the Queen's youngest sister. It may be mentioned, in passing, that Joyeuse was a friend of Damville, while Epernon was closely connected with the League. Margaret plunged with relish into the intrigues of the Court, working as ever for Anjou against the King. She even gave her support to Guise, who was becoming openly disloyal through hatred and jealousy of the *mignons*. The King finally lost patience with her,

and at a ball at the Louvre he publicly upbraided her, detailing her infidelities and even accusing her of giving birth to a bastard since she had been at court. He wrote to Navarre commanding him to take her back. After such a scene it was impossible for a husband to overlook her irregularities, and he resolved not to see her again. The King, realising how far he had gone, begged him to do so, reminding him of the unfounded rumours that had been current concerning his mother, Jeanne d'Albret. Navarre's reply was characteristic. In the presence of his whole court he laughed and said: "The King, by both his letters, does me much honour. In the first he calls me cuckold, and in this the son of a whore. I am very grateful to him."

Margaret was driven from Paris with ignominy. For two years she roamed the south intriguing against her brother and husband. She even took Agen in the name of the League, but the inhabitants revolted against her, and she was forced to leave. Finally Henry of Navarre had her arrested at Carlat in the Auvergne, whence after an interval she was sent to the castle of Usson, where she was to be kept under the strict guard of Canillac. However, this most competent courtesan swiftly seduced her gaoler, and became mistress of the castle which remained her home until 1605.

Meanwhile Henry had found solace in a new mistress, the first who had been more than a mere plaything. Diane d'Andouins, Comtesse de Guiche, known to history as "la belle Corisande," had become a widow in 1580 at the age of twenty-six. She was still beautiful, though in those days women aged quickly. Bred a Catholic, she was politically

a moderate. She more than reciprocated Henry's love, and it is not fanciful to suppose that the stiffening of his character, which is henceforth noticeable, was in some measure due to her influence. She made him realise that life was not all love and brigandage. Through her he learnt to believe in his political destiny. He promised to marry her when he was free.

While Henry was surrendering himself to the delights of an intellectual and adoring mistress, things had not been going well for Anjou in the north. The sovereignty of the Netherlands had been finally conferred on him in February, 1582. In June of that year Catherine, alone of European rulers, attempted to stop Philip II's annexation of Portugal. She sent an expedition to the Azores in support of the Pretender Antonio. William of Orange might well hope that France was about to return to the policy of Coligny, and, in alliance with the Protestant Queen of England and the Netherlands, finally to join issue with the representative of Catholic reaction. His hope was not realised. Henry III was not prepared for so bold a course, and, as usual, was jealous of his brother's success. Elizabeth had only been scheming to prevent the Netherlands from being incorporated into France and, if possible, to embroil France with Philip. For all her love-making, she had no intention of really marrying "her little frog," Anjou. The expedition to the Azores, as well as another sent out in the following year, was destroyed by the Spanish fleet. Anjou, ill satisfied with the restricted authority granted to him, rashly attempted to establish himself in a more independent position by seizing Bruges and Antwerp.

This attempt failed, and in June, 1583, Anjou retired from the Netherlands to die at Château-Thierry in the following June. One month later, William the Silent fell a victim to the pistol of Balthasar Gérard.

Anjou, though a despicable character, had at least the merit of hating the Spaniards and distrusting the Guises. He was, in his way, a patriotic Frenchman, and professed the religion of the majority of the nation. Henry of Navarre, now by a strange freak of fortune heir presumptive, was a heretic, and had yet to prove himself a patriot. Renewed civil war was inevitable.

V

The deaths of William the Silent and of Anjou within a month of each other made it essential for the Dutch to find a new protector, and in October, 1584, the sovereignty of the Netherlands was offered to Henry III. It seemed by no means impossible that he would reconcile himself with his heretic heir and accept the offer made to him. On the death of Anjou he had publicly said: "To-day I recognise the King of Navarre as my sole heir. I have always been inclined to love him, and I know that he loves me. He is rather quick-tempered, but at bottom he is sound."

This attitude was equally alarming to the Catholics who hated a heretic, to the Guises who distrusted any initiative on the King's part, and to the Spaniards who dreaded the French alliance with the Netherlands. The rumour was so strong as to amount almost to a certainty that Henry III had contracted

an incurable disease, and was incapable of having issue. The three parties felt that they must act at once, and the outcome was a new Catholic League. Following the model of the Catholic Leagues of 1576, it was formed in Paris. The city was divided into five districts : the president of each of these, assisted by an elective Council of Eleven, formed the notorious Sixteen which figures as a fore-runner of the revolutionary Committee of Public Safety. The example of Paris was rapidly followed in the provinces ; and France was threatened with the tyranny of a central club supported by numerous affiliated societies, whose authority was maintained partly by terrorism and partly by the fanaticism excited by the preaching of the Jesuits and the Franciscans.

Henry of Guise could not altogether approve of the democratic principles which, now that the Huguenot movement was apparently ceasing to be revolutionary, the Catholic League had found it necessary to borrow from Hotman and Duplessis-Mornay. His interests, however, demanded that he should put himself at its head. Moreover, this was not the only important change in the policy of the Guises. The reputation of the family, then regarded as foreigners from Lorraine, had been made in defending France against Spain. On the other side, Philip II had been most unwilling to see Henry's cousin, Mary Queen of Scots, successful in England, and had even sent secret help to the Scottish rebels. The danger in the Netherlands, however, had recently forced him to alter his views, especially as it seemed likely that Elizabeth would be forced to adopt extreme measures against Mary. The death of Anjou

and the danger of reconciliation between Henry III and his heretic heir still further aroused Philip's fears. He therefore approved the organisation of the League, and in January, 1585, concluded the Treaty of Joinville with Guise. The allies bound themselves to eradicate heresy, and to proclaim Charles, Cardinal Bourbon, the Catholic uncle of Henry of Navarre, King in the event of the death of Henry III. The Cardinal was at that time sixty-six years of age, and equally feeble in body and in mind. One of the last acts of Pope Gregory XIII was to announce that he had no objection to the Most Christian King being incarcerated in a cloister.

At the end of March, Cardinal Bourbon, as "first prince of the blood," put his signature to a manifesto of the League published at Rheims. On the political side it might well have been taken for a Huguenot document of the period immediately preceding the civil wars. It demanded the reinstatement of the nobility and the Parlements in all their privileges, the irremovability of all officials by other than judicial means, the appropriation of supplies and triennial Estates. In short, the Catholics now led the revolutionary movement: the Huguenots were becoming the champions of authority.

The chances of reconciliation between the King and his heir were further brightened by the death of Gregory and the accession of Sixtus V, who distrusted the League almost as much as he dreaded an alliance between the King and the heretic of Navarre. "I fear me," he said, "that matters will be pressed so far that the King, Catholic though he be, will be constrained to appeal to the heretics for aid to rid himself of the tyranny of the Catholics."

Henry of Navarre saw his opportunity. He caused Duplessis-Mornay to draw up a manifesto in which he proclaimed that Navarre had no desire to persecute Catholics, and, indeed, that he was ready "to receive instruction" himself. In order to avoid further bloodshed, he then offered to fight Guise alone, or ten against ten, and to abide by the result. Henry had yet to learn that civil wars are not ended in this simple way. Guise excused himself on the ground that it would not be right for him to fight a prince of the blood.

The King had formally banned the League, but he had not the power to enforce the law. He still hoped it would be unnecessary to accept Navarre's offer of military aid. As the summer went on, his unwonted energy began to disappear. He listened to his mother's advice. She was now much attracted by an amazing scheme of securing the throne after her son's death for her daughter, Claude, the wife of the Duke of Lorraine, a third cousin of Guise. In July he allowed her to yield, in his name, to the demands of the Leaguers at the Conference of Nemours. The Edicts of Toleration were revoked, and Huguenots were commanded to conform or leave the country. A deputation was sent to Gascony to find Henry of Navarre and to convert him to the Catholic faith. In the true spirit of the age the deputation was followed by a large army.

In September Sixtus V issued a Bull of Excommunication against Henry of Navarre and Condé, declaring them "heretics, apostates, chiefs, favourers and protectors of heretics and as such falling under the censures and pains laid down in the laws and canons, depriving them and their descendants of all lands and

dignities, incapable to succeed to any principality whatever especially to the Kingdom of France, and not only absolving their subjects from all oaths of fidelity but absolutely forbidding them to obey them."

In such a moment Henry was at his best. It was the blackest hour. A royal army was advancing. The Church had pronounced its extreme censure. Henry's own wife was stirring up trouble against him in the Agenois. He had no money and no troops. Parma appeared to be triumphing in the Netherlands. Elizabeth was too fickle even to be called an ally.

With amazing boldness Henry published a vigorous reply to the Bull of Excommunication. It was addressed to "*Monsieur Sixte*, self-styled Pope of Rome." He offered to prove that the Pope himself was a heretic and challenged him to appear before a general council of the Church. The reply was circulated everywhere. A copy even appeared at the entrance to the Vatican. No action could have been more calculated to put fresh heart into his supporters.

Even Sixtus, who still disliked the arbitrary methods of the League, was moved to admiration. He is said to have remarked that "of all the monarchs of Europe there were only two who deserved a throne and in whom he could confide—and both of them were heretics." He referred, of course, to Henry of Navarre and Elizabeth of England.

The Huguenots found an unexpected ally in the intolerant Parlement of Paris, which refused to verify the Bull because it resented the attempt to alter the succession to the throne and was as ever jealous to preserve the rights of the Gallican Church. Henry was further strengthened by a renewal of the interrupted alliance with Damville, who was still governor

—and, in actual practice, King—of Languedoc. It is true his motive was not the highest. “I care not,” he said, “to become a tool in the hands of the Guises for the furtherance of the ambitious views of those enemies of the House of Montmorency.” His support was none the less effective.

Although Henry at once sent ambassadors to England and to the Protestant princes of Germany, it was upon the men he had with him—his devoted friends, such as Lesdiguières, Turenne and Rohan, that he had to rely. His letters to these men written at this period are full of commands, urgent and imperious. To quote one only as typical of his style : “Put wings to your best horse. I have told Montespan to break the wind of his. And why? That I shall tell you at Nérac. Hasten, speed, fly! That is the command of your master and the prayer of your friend.” His friends did not disappoint him. Rosny and the faithful Corisande mortgaged their estates to the hilt to finance the inevitable war. Corisande was not repaid.

The outlook was black enough. Three armies were moving southwards—Mayenne in Guyenne, Biron in Saintonge, and Joyeuse in Poitou. Joyeuse was determined to do great things for “the King,” as the chronicler L’Estoile put it, “had begun to tire of Joyeuse and even reproached him with lack of courage, whereupon Joyeuse asked for the command of an army against the Huguenots and had been given that of Poitou.” During the winter of 1585–6 Henry of Navarre very wisely confined his activities to guerilla warfare. He received satisfactory news from Ségur, his envoy in Germany, who promised that he would shortly return with an army of *reiters*.

At the request of the King and the Queen Mother he sent Rosny to the Court, where he was well received. The elaborate negotiations, however, were doomed to be fruitless as Henry resolutely refused to change his religion. He pointed out that if he did so he would inevitably lose his control over the Huguenots. Never for a moment did he deny that at some stage "conversion" might be necessary.

Henry was, in fact, saved by the inefficiency of Mayenne, who had no plan and who merely wished the war to continue so that his own power might be perpetuated. Henry knew that the King detested the League and was only waiting for an opportunity to free himself from his clutches. It was common knowledge that he regretted the revocation of the edicts of toleration, and on signing their revocation he had confessed: "I signed the former edicts against my conscience but with a good will; this one I sign in conformity with my conscience but against my will."

In October, 1586, Mayenne returned to Paris, "having done more for the reputation of the King of Navarre than for his own." Soon afterwards the indefatigable Queen Mother, now old, fat and gouty, set out on the last of her journeys of pacification. After elaborate negotiations in which both sides suspected treachery, an armistice was agreed, and in December Catherine met Henry of Navarre at St. Brice, near Cognac. Guise was much disturbed lest the war should end and the two Henrys should be reconciled. He need not, however, have been alarmed. Navarre knew too well he could not trust his mother-in-law. A curious fragment of their conversation has been preserved. She told him that no peace was possible

unless he became a Catholic. He replied that that was impossible "without forfeiting his conscience and his honour." "Believe me," she replied, "my son the King and I seek only your good."

"Pardon me, Madame, I perceive quite the contrary."

"Let that pass, my son," she replied, and begged him to think of all the trouble and anxiety he was causing an old woman like herself.

"Madame, I am not the cause of it, nor is it I who hinder you from resting in your bed. It is you who hinder me from resting in mine. Why should I always be in such anxiety, I, who only ask for rest? The troubles you take please and nourish you, for repose is the greatest enemy of your life."

"Well, let us make a short truce," replied Catherine diplomatically.

"Madame, I will do so."

"Do not deceive yourself," said she, "you expect to have some *reiters*, but you will have none."

"Madame, I did not come here to receive intelligence from you."

Nothing material resulted from the interview, but Henry was once again recognised as heir presumptive.

Soon after this meeting Henry of Navarre was joined by Francis of Conti and Charles of Soissons, a brother and half brother of Condé. Both of them were Catholics, but they were anxious to fight against the ambitions of the House of Guise. Henry promised Soissons the hand of his sister Catherine. Being married and childless, he regarded her as his heir, the Salic law having no application to Navarre. Soissons, who appears at first to have been cold and

pompous was delighted, as he felt well qualified to administer the rich dowry he anticipated.

Hearing of the approach of the Germans, Henry resolved to meet them. In doing so he encountered Joyeuse at Coutras, where, on the 20th October, 1587 though the engagement lasted little over an hour the Huguenots won their first pitched battle. The Protestants, having taken up their position, sang, as was their custom, part of Marot's rhyming translation of the hundred and eighteenth Psalm. They then knelt down in prayer. The royal army was amazed at the sight. In his excitement Joyeuse cried, "The day is ours already, the dogs are trembling and are half beaten." An experienced soldier, Lavardin, was not so certain. "Do not be too sure. I know them better than you do. They fall on their knees and implore the divine mercy before the attack, but when they come to the charge they show themselves devils and lions. Then you will remember my warning."

The royal army was magnificently equipped but it lacked discipline. Henry of Navarre could count on the loyalty of every man. Before the battle he publicly asked for forgiveness for having seduced the daughter of a magistrate of La Rochelle, saying to the minister, Chandieu: "Man cannot humiliate himself too much before God, or brave too much against man. Then, turning to Condé and Soissons, he said: "I shall say nothing else to you but that you are of the House of Bourbon, and if God lives, I shall show you that I am worthy to be the first born of the family." To which Condé replied: "And we shall show you that you have good juniors."

The Protestants were greatly outnumbered, but

Henry relied on his artillery, which seems to have consisted of only three cannons. However, they were used with devastating effect, and their success was followed by a magnificent charge. The royal cavalry broke and a general massacre ensued. Joyeuse did not attempt to escape. Fighting to the last, he and his young brother, Claude de St. Sauveur, were eventually cut down.

That night the King of Navarre and his officers supped in an upper room filled with the flags taken from the vanquished army, while the bodies of Joyeuse and his brother were laid out on a table in the room below. It was his first great success since Cahors. The Catholics were dismayed. When Henry's uncle, Cardinal Bourbon, heard of the news, "he wept like a calf, and inspired by a Catholic (that is to say a Leaguer) zeal said that he would that his nephew had perished rather than the Duke of Joyeuse."

Despite the great renown which Henry had gained, he made no use of his victory. He immediately left his army and accompanied only by Soissons went south into Béarn to lay the flags he had captured from the royalists at the feet of Corisande. It is possible that, elated by his victory, he had thoughts of renewing his promise to marry her. The idea had been constantly in his mind. The year before he had consulted Aubigné on the matter, but he had received no encouragement in that quarter. The issue had been clearly put to him : "You have but one more step to take before you ascend the throne. If you marry your mistress you preclude all possibility of ever taking it. Only when you have tamed the hearts of Frenchmen and won their esteem by your great qualities and fine action will you be able to contract

such a marriage which to-day would certainly debase you in their eyes." Perhaps Henry, fresh from Coutras, thought he had fulfilled Aubigné's condition.

Whatever his intensions may have been, the meeting with Corisande was a bitter disappointment. He had not seen her for fully two years, and had forgotten that she was already in her thirty-fourth year. He found that she had grown fat and her skin had become leathery. All possibility of marriage was at an end, and she, loving and tactful as ever, did not mention the subject. Henry escaped as soon as he decently could. He continued for some time to write her charming letters. It was pleasant to have a trustworthy confidante, but his love was dead.

It is difficult to believe that even a man so impetuous as Henry should throw away the fruits of a great victory merely to be able to receive in person the congratulations of his mistress. Historians have differed as to his motives. It is thought that he may have realised that to defeat the King too soundly would be to play into the hands of Guise. It is true that Henry of Navarre did everything possible to facilitate his ultimate alliance with Henry of Valois. Sully told his secretaries that his master was dissuaded from pursuing the beaten enemy by La Tremouille and Montgomery, and it is certain that the whole campaign was hindered by the constant quarrels of his captains—Condé, Soissons and Turenne. Henry found the ambitions of Condé very trying. He wanted to divide up that part of France under Huguenot control and to rule one part himself. Henry may well have gone to Béarn, where he could be sure of sympathy, to escape from the quarrels of his associates.

One unfortunate result of his decision to take

Soissons with him was that Catherine de Bourbon met her promised bridegroom and the two fell violently in love. This did not suit Henry at all, as he was beginning to repent of his promise. He thought that his sister might be married far more profitably to some foreign Protestant who might prove a useful ally. He was thinking of the unlovely James VI of Scotland. Soissons had nothing to offer except his good looks. At the beginning of 1588 he left Navarre.

The Huguenot army had scattered immediately after Coutras. Not only had Henry and Soissons retired to Béarn, but Condé had gone to La Rochelle and Turenne to Périgord. The German allies were left to their fate, friendless and leaderless in an unknown country. Disregarding Henry's directions they encountered Guise and Mayenne on the 29th October at Vimory near Montargis. Though the engagement was more or less indecisive, further advance was impossible. Some days later they were beaten by an army commanded by Epemon, notwithstanding the fact that the King had already granted them terms.

The situation was quite beyond the control of Henry III. The war had been fought at his expense, but, with the League in a triumphant mood, war was less dangerous to him than peace. His apparent inactivity had increased his unpopularity; he had neither the courage nor the disloyalty to surrender his favourite, the Duke of Epemon, and Catholic excitement was raised to a high pitch by the execution of Mary Stuart, which the King was unjustly suspected of having favoured. Guise won the credit of having forced the foreigners to retreat. "Saul," cried the fanatics of Paris, "has slain his thousands, but David

his ten thousands." Henry III vainly tried to find consolation in his monkeys and parrots.

In March, 1588, Condé died in mysterious circumstances at St. Jean d'Angely. He was a true Huguenot and a man of high moral qualities. It was universally believed that he had been poisoned by Charlotte de Trémouille, the young heiress he had married two years previously. The belief was probably well founded, and it is quite certain that she would have been questioned on the rack had she not been pregnant. As it was, the examination was postponed, but fortunately for her the birth of a young prince of Condé was so welcome that her punishment was confined to a rigorous imprisonment, which in fact continued for six years. Nor was the more than doubtful paternity of the child questioned. In 1596 she was formally cleared of the crime by the order of the Parlement of Paris. By that time Henry of Navarre could afford to be generous.

Henry was much disturbed by his cousin's death. Not only had he lost the comrade of St. Bartholomew, of his captivity and of Coutras, but he knew that he might well be the next victim of Catholic politicians. Corisande had the same fear. She wrote to Henry calling the Princess "a bad woman and a dangerous beast," and telling him that "all these poisoners are Papists"—a curious sentiment to come from the pen of a professing Catholic.

Meanwhile the position of the King was growing daily more dangerous. Guise was winning more and more popularity by protesting against the favour shown to the *mignons* and against the burden of taxation. His insolence was increased by the support he was receiving from Philip of Spain, who was

anxious at this moment to prevent any interference with his schemes for the Armada. Henry III hesitated to comply with all Guise's demands, and thereupon the Duke entered Paris in defiance of the royal command. The following day, 13th May, 1588, is known to history as the day of the Barricades. What happened can best be described in the words of the Tuscan ambassador's report* : " Guise had sent to Paris over 10,000 men, who, under various pretexts, carried on propaganda throughout the town, waiting, however, for the Duke's arrival, and watching for a favourable opportunity to secure the King. His Majesty, warned of this large number of strangers who had privily entered Paris, and were secreted in the Leaguers' houses, sent for twelve companies of Swiss, and six of French, to protect him against their plots and to hunt out these people. Seeing the Swiss posted on guard in the public square, the Duke suspected that they had entered Paris to thwart him, and perhaps to kill him. He began therefore to arm the populace, and to send his emissaries hither and thither, persuading the townsfolk that the King intended to place a garrison in the town, and take cruel measures against the citizens. Everyone then armed, and barricades were raised across the streets, preventing the Swiss and French companies from advancing. Thus matters stood until midday. The Duke then sent to the Queen Mother, advising her to take steps to allay the disturbance, for on his side he was resolved to die with honour, and if anyone wanted his skin he would sell it very dear. The Queen did what she could—spoke to the King, begged

* This extract is taken from Armstrong : " French Wars of Religion " (1892).

the captains of the quarters to quell the riot. . . . She was unable, however, to obtain any result. . . . Many shots were fired on both sides, and those of the enemy never missed the Swiss, who had no cover, and no practice in street fighting. They were forced to retire from their posts, and give way before the people and the Duke's soldiers, who covered by the barricades, and firing from windows with great rapidity, and in complete security, despised all the royalists' efforts. Had not the Duke gone in person to allay the tumult, all the Swiss would have been killed. . . . The King then ordered the Swiss to retire within the palace called the Louvre. The poor King was here practically besieged. . . . When night came the troops stood to their arms, while the King bitterly bemoaned his fortunes, bewailing the general treachery. Guise insisted that all the foreign companies of Royal Guards should be dismissed. . . . Then he expressed a wish to come to terms, and to present a petition. . . . Herein everything was contained which tended to his own aggrandisement, and the King's abasement. The poor King, not knowing what to do with himself, not wishing to fall into his enemies' hands, nor even to send for Guise to make his entreaties, as many wished, told his mother to go and find the Duke, and try and quiet the people. While she was gone the King passed out in a coach by a gate near the Louvre, telling his guards to follow. As soon as he was out he raised his head and shook it, crying : ' God be praised ! the yoke is off.'

Never was a man more pitifully mistaken. Though he was able to make good his escape to Chartres he was quite without support, and as yet could not bring himself to unite with Henry of Navarre. His shame

was completed by the fulsome congratulations sent by Pope Sixtus to the victorious Duke. Catherine de' Medici, indefatigable as ever, was still busy negotiating with the League. Despite her entreaties the King refused to contemplate returning to Paris. In July she reluctantly agreed to Articles of Union with Guise, whereby the Bourbons were to be excluded from the throne and the *religion prétendue réformée* was to be extirpated. Guise was to be Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom. A few weeks later Henry III was compelled to put his signature to the ignominious surrender. The League was granted formal pardon.

The States-General was to meet at Blois in October. The King's efforts to obtain a majority favourable to himself were futile. In vain did he declare that "the proudest tomb in which I could be buried would be amid the ruins of heresy." He was utterly discredited. The only way in which he could escape the thralldom of Guise was to resort to the ancient method of tyrannicide. On the 23rd December Henry of Guise was summoned from the company of Charlotte de Sauves, Henry of Navarre's former mistress, to the royal chamber. Confident of himself and of the powerlessness of the King, he went alone and unarmed. No sooner had he entered than he was struck down by the King's Gascon guards. As he lay dead the King kicked his dead body as Guise himself had kicked that of Coligny more than sixteen years before. "*Mon Dieu, qu'il est grand,*" he said, "*il paraît plus grand mort que vivant.*" His brother, the Cardinal of Guise, was imprisoned and a little later suffered the same fate as the Duke. It is said that Henry was determined to be rid of him because, on hearing of his brother's death, he had unwisely said :

"I hope that I may not die before I shall hold the head of the tyrant between my knees and make him a crown with the point of a dagger." Henry III went to see his mother. "Now at last I am King. I have killed the King of Paris." Catherine, however, was not impressed. She knew too much about murder. The ancient Cardinal Bourbon, the Charles X of the League, was also imprisoned.

Catherine's health was obviously failing, but she allowed herself no respite. Early in the new year she went to visit Cardinal Bourbon, who reproached her bitterly for her conduct. "If you had not deceived us," he said, "and brought us here with fine words, the two brothers would not be dead, and I should be a free man." It was a bitterly cold day and the visit was too much for Catherine. She caught a chill, from the effects of which she died. The deaths of the Guises and the Queen Mother mark the end of an epoch. It was but a question of time until Henry of Navarre ruled France.

VI

For more than a year Henry of Navarre had been occupied with the religious and political activities of his Huguenots. Though the Huguenots had ceased to be the revolutionary party with the death of Anjou, when Henry became heir presumptive, the federal or republican idea was not dead. That idea was inherent in their organisation. It had shown itself in the great political assembly at La Rochelle in 1588—the first which had been held for four years. There were protests against over-centralisation and against the tyrannical acts of the protector of the

Protestants. It was demanded that each province should have its separate protector. Worst of all, the Assembly refused to make Henry a money grant until he had promised to grant its demands. Henry was a born opportunist and knew how to handle the deputies. Giving with good grace what he could not afford to withhold, he insisted that he would only be president by virtue of election. He established provincial chambers of justice to check his officers, and a controlling council of twelve members. Furthermore, he listened with apparent respect and repentance to the homilies delivered by the Assembly on the shortcomings of his private life. He did not, however, conceal his joy when the Assembly broke up. On the 22nd December, 1588, he wrote to Corisande : " In truth, were there to be another assembly, I should go stark mad. All is finished and well finished, thank God."

He knew that time was on his side. The Huguenot nobles, whose religion for the most part was as nebulous as his own, were now becoming once again more influential than the ministers and citizens who, for a time after St. Bartholomew, had almost monopolised the resistance. It would have been suicidal for the Huguenots to disregard their leader's position as heir to the throne. Henry might be distrusted, but only through him could the Huguenot party, inferior to their rivals in numbers, wealth and organisation, hope to obtain lasting security. Huguenot political theory underwent a complete change. The fundamental character of the Salic Law of legitimate succession was now expounded from press and pulpit with as much energy as had been the original compact and the right of deposition.

Henry appreciated that temporary concessions to Huguenot democracy would not prejudice him. Condé's death had removed the only alternative Protestant leader. The murder of Guise not only freed him of a rival in popularity, but the odium it brought on the King made it inevitable that he would be compelled to seek the aid of his heir. Henry did not conceal his delight at the tragedy of Blois. He is reported to have said that "if in addition to this good news he might only hear that his wife had been strangled and her mother dead, then he would have every reason to sing the song of Simeon." Before a month had passed part of his prayer was granted. Unfortunately, his joy was somewhat marred by a severe attack of pleurisy.

Meanwhile the King's position was desperate. The assassination of the Duke led to an open revolt of the League. The news reached Paris on Christmas Eve, 1588, and the mob forthwith began to plunder the houses of suspected royalists. The Duke of Aumale was elected Governor in the absence of Mayenne, the eldest surviving brother of the murdered duke. The Sorbonne declared that Henry III had forfeited his right to the crown, and absolved his subjects from their allegiance. Nearly all the towns of France declared themselves for the League. In February, 1589, Mayenne entered Paris, and, though he refused the title of king, he broke the royal seals of office as though to imply that the throne was vacant. He assumed the title of Lieutenant-General of the realm, and ruled Paris with a Council of forty, formed of deputies from the affiliated societies of the League. Henry III's last chance of maintaining an independent attitude disappeared

with the failure of Nevers' army, which rapidly melted away, refusing to fight for the assassin of their favourite chief. There was nothing left for him but to unite with Henry of Navarre. It had been his only hope four years ago. Now it was almost too late.

At the beginning of April a truce was agreed between the two Henrys. The King surrendered, as a cautionary town, one of his few remaining strongholds—Saumur, which commanded the crossing of the Loire. There was great suspicion and hesitation on both sides. Navarre feared another Blois. Henry III was reluctant, because he feared that friendship with a heretic and toleration of his supporters would put an end to all hopes of papal absolution for the recent murders, and he well knew that it would bring Spain into open support of the League. Both his fears were well grounded, but he had no alternative.

Duplessis-Mornay urged Henry of Navarre to overcome his suspicion, and in the third week of April got him to publish a little-known proclamation which throws considerable light on his attitude at this time. It is written in support of the King, and is a violent attack on the League, which is described as "disturber of the peace and enemies of the human race." He appealed to all loyal patriotic Frenchmen to support him, and there are special sections addressed to the clergy, the nobility, the lawyers, and the merchants. He disclaims all personal ambition, and, feeling at last that he is not entirely dependent on Huguenot support, he points out that neither party can be exterminated. He then most significantly continues: "I have always been open to

conviction, and I am so still. Instruct me. I am not opinionated."

Henry III was at last convinced of the necessity for reconciliation by his half-sister, Diane of Angoulême, the natural daughter of Henry II. The meeting took place at Plessis-lès-Tours, a castle built by Louis XI in which Jeanne d'Albret had spent a part of her girlhood. Despite their mutual suspicion the two Kings greeted each other with seeming joy. Henry of Navarre, we are told, was "dressed as a soldier, wearing a doublet rather threadbare on the shoulders and where it had been worn by his cuirasse, russet velvet breeches, a scarlet coat and grey hat with a big white feather . . ." The mixed crowd of Protestants and Catholics appeared to be delighted. Navarre encouraged the King, who referred to Cardinal Charles, the King of the League, with obvious fear. "Courage, Sire," replied Navarre, "two Henrys are worth more than one Charles."

Henry of Navarre was not slow in showing the value of his alliance. Mayenne, who was as fat and ungainly as his brother had been lithe and handsome, was in the neighbourhood. Pope Sixtus said that he spent as much time eating as Navarre spent sleeping. Nevertheless, he had a strong army, and proceeded to attempt a surprise attack on Tours, but he was soon driven off by Henry's Protestants fighting side by side with a Catholic force under Crillon. A few days after La Noue, with a mixed army, defeated the Parisian fanatics led by the Duke of Aumale.

On the other hand, the King's fear as to the papal attitude proved well-founded. Sixtus did not take the death of Guise—whom he had always disliked—too seriously, but the murder of one cardinal

and the imprisonment of another were a different matter. Egged on by Spanish agents, he published on the 24th May a "monitory" which commanded Henry III to release the Cardinal forthwith, and to appear at Rome within sixty days to answer the charges brought against him.

Fortunately, the heretic prince had been able to put new heart into the Most Christian King, and they continued their victorious northern march. In July, Paris seemed doomed. Henry III was established at St. Cloud, and Henry of Navarre at Meudon. Victory, however, was not to come so easily.

Henry III had often said that "the sight of a monkish cowl made an impression on his mind as pleasurable as the most delicate bodily sensation." Accordingly, on the 1st August, 1589, he did not hesitate to admit a Paris monk, Jacques Clément by name, who had come—so he was told—with a letter from the Comte de Brienne. The King was not yet fully dressed. He was adjusting his trousers and reading this letter when the monk leapt forward and stabbed him in the stomach, leaving the knife in the wound. Clément was at once cut down by the guards and, in accordance with the custom of the time, his body was thrown out of the window. The wound was at first thought not to be fatal. Navarre, accompanied by Rosny, hurried to the King's bedside. Henry III greeted him kindly: "My brother, you see how your enemies and mine have treated me. You must take care that they do not do the same to you. I know it is for you to possess yourself of the right which I have endeavoured to preserve for you, and which has brought me to this pass.

I regret nothing ; for justice—whose protector I have ever been—has willed that you should succeed me in this Kindgom. But you will suffer many a defeat unless you resolve to change your religion. I exhort you to do so as much for the salvation of your soul as for the temporal advantages I earnestly desire for you.” The King’s condition grew worse, and a little later he died, urging all his followers faithfully to serve the new King.

The crime had been instigated by the revolutionaries of Paris. Mayenne’s sister, Catherine Duchess of Montpensier, is supposed to have worked upon the feelings of the half-demented monk to make him feel that murder was his sacred duty. At any rate, she was obviously delighted when she heard that the precipitate action of the royal guards had made it impossible for him to be examined under torture. Everywhere the League taught that Clément was a saint. The Jesuit Mariana expressed the general feeling in these words : “ Having ascertained from the divines whom he had consulted that a tyrant could be lawfully destroyed, he made to himself a mighty name by slaying a King.” The majority of League preachers were considerably more forceful in their language.

Henry of Navarre was lawfully King at last, but it was in reality too soon. Though a few Catholics like Biron and Epernon, Bellegarde and d’O offered him their support, he knew he could as yet rely on no one. He could not afford to dispense with Huguenot support. Therefore he could not abjure his religion, and therefore he could not win the obedience of the Catholics. He was so penniless that he had to appear in the violet mourning which

the dead King himself had been wearing for his mother. Making a virtue of necessity, he retired from Paris ostensibly to bury the body of Henry III in the abbey of St. Corneille at Compiègne. In reality he had no choice but to retreat.

The last of the Valois had died under the Pope's censure, and despised by his subjects. He left a legacy of civil war and economic ruin to his successor. Without friends, without money, and without the recognition of his people, the first of the Bourbons had by his own exertions to create his Kingdom. France had need of a great man, and in Henry she was not disappointed.

CHAPTER III

A KING WITHOUT A KINGDOM

I

FRANÇOIS D'O, one of Henry III's least competent but most showy *mignons*, was insulting. He refused to remove his hat in the royal presence, and doggedly demanded that the King should become a Catholic before he could promise to serve him loyally. Henry refused, and pointed out that instruction was necessary before his conscience would permit him to change his religion. In reality the interpretation he would put on his favourite phrase "receiving instruction" would depend on his success in the field. It was a question of policy. Could he retain Huguenot support if he became a Catholic? Could he win over the Politiques and the moderate-minded Catholics if he remained a Protestant? For the moment his situation was too precarious to take any unnecessary risks.

The attitude of d'O was typical of most of the royalists who had not definitely gone over to the League. All of them—Henry, a bastard of Charles IX who became Comte d'Auvergne, Diane of Angoulême, Bellegarde, Epernon—refused to make their submission save on their own terms. Epernon even went so far as to leave the Court, thinking that he could secure the best terms by adhering to neither side. Biron asked to be Governor of

Périgord, with absolute power. Henry IV humoured him as best he could. He was not yet in a position to argue. Already he had sent ambassadors to England, Holland, Germany, Venice and Switzerland. He had heard that Sancy had adroitly won over the Swiss, but for the moment retreat from the neighbourhood of Paris was essential.

At first Henry thought of retiring beyond the Loire where he could, at any rate, be fairly sure of his own safety. Aubigné dissuaded him, pointing out the desirability of making every effort to hold Picardy, Champagne and Normandy, whence the capital drew its supplies. The Duke of Longueville was accordingly sent to Picardy, the Marshal d'Aumont to Champagne, while Henry himself marched into Normandy towards Dieppe, where he might be ready to receive the English should Elizabeth so far forget her customary caution as to send him an army. To act thus was to take a considerable risk, but it showed that Henry IV was not content to remain a mere prince of the south.

The preachers of the League were fulminating against the man they would only refer to as "*le Béarnais*." All suspected of favouring his cause were imprisoned or murdered. The League, however, was much hampered by the fact that their King, Cardinal Charles, was kept a prisoner by the heretic first at Chinon and then at Fontenay. Many Parisians would have preferred another candidate to the aged Bourbon. They considered that it was playing into Navarre's hands to support a member of his own family, particularly when he was a prisoner and most unlikely to have children, even if the Pope allowed him to lay aside his orders.

One of the House of Lorraine would be a better candidate. However, legitimatist feeling was too strong, and no other candidate was available. Mayenne refused to consider the possibility of becoming King himself, fearing that it would lose him the support of Spain. Philip II, for the moment, was not anxious to press the claims of his daughter by Elizabeth of France. The League proclaimed the Cardinal King under the name of Charles X.

Already the weakness of the League could be detected, though its hold on Paris and almost all the great towns and the ready financial backing of Philip of Spain were formidable indications of its strength. Henry, however, appreciated that its leaders were hopelessly divided. Mayenne, who was always cold or hungry or sleepy, was not a formidable adversary. He was still sufficiently a Frenchman to distrust the Spanish alliance. Moreover, Philip thought he could best control the League by sending it lavish promises, but few doubloons. Yet, for the time being, the League had the men and the money. Henry had neither.

Early in September Henry established himself at Dieppe, which was then one of Europe's greatest ports with a population as large as that of to-day. His negotiations with Elizabeth were not altogether satisfactory. He refused to consider surrendering Calais, which he had not yet captured, as the price of her support. He had to rely entirely on his friends—Rosny, la Force, Biron, Conti and François de Coligny, son of the Admiral. With his usual irony, Henry complained: "I am a King without a Kingdom, a husband without a wife, and a soldier without money."

Mayenne, with an army which outnumbered the King's by almost four to one, was advancing from Paris. The League was confident of victory. Many had already hired windows in the Rue St. Antoine to see Henry IV brought back in triumph to the Bastille. The royalists worked night and day to fortify Dieppe, and then advanced to Arques to meet the enemy. Coligny was left to defend Dieppe. Henry had less than four thousand men, but his position on the hill on which the castle stands was a good one to defend. The Leaguer, de Belin, taken prisoner in a preliminary skirmish, was amazed at the smallness of his forces. "Vous ne les voyez pas toutes, Monsieur de Belin," replied the King. "Car vous n'y contez pas Dieu ni le bon droit qui m'assistent."

In the early morning of St. Matthew's Day, the 21st September, 1589, a thick fog brooded over the valley of Martin-Eglise where lay the army of the League. The royalists had slept in battle order. Before the fight began the Huguenots, according to their custom, solemnly sang the sixty-eighth psalm. Mayenne was afterwards to tell Aubigné that he owed his defeat to this "old Huguenot phalanx—men who, from father to son, were used to death."

The battle of Arques began disastrously enough. Three hundred German *lansquenets* fighting for the League advanced to the Huguenot entrenchment, and surrendered to their fellow Protestants. In the thick of battle they were not disarmed. Then, turning on the royalists who had spared them, they drove them from their trenches. Their treachery was not forgiven. It appeared that the League must inevitably win through sheer weight of numbers.

The King was everywhere performing prodigies of valour. To Rosny, who begged for reinforcements, he said : " My friend, I have no one to send to you, but for all that you must not lose courage." The situation was truly desperate when providentially the fog cleared away, and the four pieces of artillery in the castle on the hill began to play with deadly effect on the serried ranks of the League. Victory was made certain by the arrival of François de Coligny with his reserve of Huguenot veterans. On his own initiative, seeing that Mayenne was fully occupied, he had advanced from his post at Dieppe. " God has sent you, Coligny ! " cried Henry. By nightfall the royal army alone remained on the field of battle.

Mayenne's army was in headlong retreat. He lost nearly half his army in the battle, or by subsequent desertion. The Leaguers in Paris had to work hard to keep up the morale of the people disappointed of the promised triumphal procession. Mayenne had captured three royal standards at Arques. Madame de Montpensier had fifteen more of the same pattern made to regale the Paris mob. Many of the soldiers were out of hand. The Paris chronicler, L'Estoile, noted that that summer they had " compelled priests by holding knives at their throats to ' baptise '—as they called it—calves, sheep and pigs . . . with the names of fish such as carp, pike and eels . . . in order to render them suitable viands for days of abstinence." But many of their activities were far more disquieting to their leaders.

Henry's success has its immediate effect in Europe. Despite his excommunication he received the recognition of the Swiss cantons and the definite alliance

of Venice. Even the cautious Elizabeth was moved to action now that it appeared that her ally had some chance of success. She sent thirteen ships to Dieppe carrying what for her was a vast sum of money, together with "artillery in profusion" and stores of all kinds, including even slippers for his soldiers. More welcome still was the arrival of 4,000 English and 1,200 Scottish soldiers. The latter, then as to-day, attracted the special attention of the French by reason of their strange attire. The Scots, we are told, "made us laugh, seeing them armed and dressed like the figures of antiquity portrayed on old tapestries, with . . . iron helmets covered with black cloth like priests' hats, and using bagpipes and hautboys when advancing to battle."

Henry took advantage of Mayenne's retirement to Amiens to conquer the Orléanais and thus to re-establish connection with the Protestants of the south. He then proceeded to advance towards Paris. It is possible that he might have taken the city by assault, but he was unwilling to risk his army or to reduce the richest city of France to ruins. "Paris must not become a cemetery," said Henry. "I have no wish to reign over dead men." He therefore surrounded the city in an attempt to starve it into submission. Towards the end of October he planned an attack on the faubourgs which lay outside the walls in order to terrify the citizens into surrender. The fighting was most severe, but almost everywhere Henry was successful. Though he forbade his men to pillage the Catholic churches there was plenty of plunder. Sully relates that he "won there fully 3,000 crowns, and my men won very considerable booty."

The King's share was of a less durable nature, but

for the time was equally satisfactory. He found "a more precious prize than the aggregate of the rich booty captured by his soldiers" in Marie de Beauvilliers, abbess elect of the Benedictine house of Montmartre. She was reputed to be remarkably beautiful, and this was probably true, as for some time she had served Catherine de' Medici as a member of the *escadron volant*. At any rate she managed to console the King for the disappointment he had felt in Corisande. Curiously enough, despite his promises, Henry did not take her with him when he left Paris. Instead he gave her to Bellegarde. Doubtless he felt that in so doing he had earned Bellegarde's gratitude and would be justified in taking a mistress from him should need arise. A year was to pass before he met Gabrielle d'Estrées.

Early in November Henry heard that Mayenne, with Spanish aid, was advancing towards Paris. On the 2nd he climbed the tower of St. Germain des Prés, whence he could see all Paris. He was disconsolate, for the city was too strong and he suffered from a distressing lack of artillery. His army was depleted because he was compelled through lack of money to send many of his men to their homes.

Henry retired westwards to consolidate his previous conquests. Despite his successes his party was not united. Many of the Catholics and of the Court party of Henry III still distrusted a heretic leader and toyed with the idea of offering their support to the imprisoned "Charles X." The Huguenots were even more dissatisfied. Their leader was King, yet they continued to suffer irksome religious disabilities. The Declaration of St. Cloud, which Henry had published on the day after his accession, was anything

but satisfactory. True, it had established mutual toleration, but Huguenot worship was confined to its "accustomed places." In addition, the King had said that he desired to be instructed by a "free council," which he had promised should be held within six months. That council had been indefinitely postponed because the legate Cajetan, who sympathised with the League far more than the cautious Sixtus, had persuaded the bishops to refuse to attend. Yet Henry continued persistently to talk of "instruction." This Huguenot discontent found an intrepid spokesman in Duplessis-Mornay, who boldly reproached the King for his inconsistency and lack of consideration for the Huguenots, who had risked all in his service. He upbraided him in particular for his failure to carry out the promises he had made to the Protestant Assembly at La Rochelle. Henry listened patiently, but did nothing.

Despite the dissatisfaction of his supporters and his apparent failure before Paris, Henry's prospects at the beginning of 1590 were by no means hopeless. The military victory which was essential before he could attempt to restore order in his ruined Kingdom at last seemed within his reach. He knew the Huguenots could not afford to desert him. They must wait for their reward.

II

In February, 1590, Mayenne laid siege to Melun. Rosny besought Henry to relieve the town, but before he arrived bad news from Rouen had drawn the besiegers westwards. Henry proceeded to besiege

Dreux, thus cutting off Mayenne from Paris. There was a rumour that Henry was retreating and it was only on that account that Mayenne consented to cross the river Eure by the bridge of Ivry. Thus on the 14th March the two armies found, rather to their surprise, that battle was unavoidable.

As usual on such an occasion, Henry was at his best. Bishop Hardouin de Beaumont de Péréfixe, who wrote a history of Henry the Great for the edification of his grandson, Louis XIV, thus portrays the scene : "The armies being ready to attack each other, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and joining his hands, called upon God to be witness of his intention, invoking his assistance, and praying that he would reduce the rebels to an acknowledgment of him whom the order of succession had given them for their legitimate sovereign. 'But, Lord,' said he, 'if it pleaseth Thee to dispose otherwise, or that I should be of the number of those kings whom Thou dedicatest to Thine anger, deprive me of my life with my crown ; consent that I may this day fall a victim to Thy holy will ; let my death deliver France from the calamities of war, and my blood be the last that shall be shed in this quarrel.'

"Immediately after, he caused his helmet to be given him, on the top of which he had a plume of three white feathers ; and having put it on, before he pulled down his visor, he told his squadrons : 'My companions, if you this day follow my fortune I shall likewise follow yours. I will overcome, or die with you. Let me only conjure you to keep your ranks ; and if the heat of the combat makes you quit them, think at once of rallying—it will be the gain of the battle. . . . If you lose your ensigns,

cornets, or banners, lose not the sight of my white plume, which you will always find in the road to honour and victory.' ”

It was, as Duplessis-Mornay told him, “ the bravest folly that ever was to stake the fate of the Kingdom on one cast of the dice.” Henry could have avoided battle if Mayenne could not ; but Henry knew that his opponent was a contemptible general. In addition he could only keep his army together by victories. He knew the Swiss mercenaries were unpaid and mutinous, and he knew that he could rely on his own men. The Huguenot contingent was as dour and trusty as Cromwell’s Ironsides. “ They displayed neither scarf nor decoration,” wrote De Thou, “ but their accoutrements inspired grim terror. The Duke’s army, on the contrary, was magnificent in its equipment. The officers wore bright coloured scarves, while gold glittered upon their helmets and lances.”

There was little order in the action, which was all over in two hours of carnage. On one wing the Huguenots had their revenge on the German *lansquenets* for their treachery at Arques. They were cut down almost to a man. “ Sauvez les Français et main basse sur les étrangers ” was the watchword of the day. On the other wing the royalists were at first beaten, but they were rallied by reinforcements led by Biron, who, though a political traitor, was a first-class soldier. The combat was in fact decided by the central force of either army, Egmont leading the Spaniards and Mayenne the gentleman of his party against the King. The Leaguers were marshalled too closely together. Henry’s squadron got amongst them, and a desperate hand-to-hand battle ensued. The King was reported to be killed,

but soon his white plume was seen in the path which he had promised. Egmont was slain ; Mayenne's standard-bearer fell by Henry's own hand ; and the army of the Leaguers was routed and driven from the field. Five cannon and a hundred standards were among the spoils. There were no standards this time for the Duchess of Montpensier to copy for the edification of the Parisians.

The Guise faction was beaten, but Henry had not touched its Spanish ally. Speedy action was necessary if Henry was to take Paris before Philip could send fresh men and supplies. Unfortunately Henry did not remember the lesson of Coutras. Biron persuaded him not to advance. His arguments were supported by nearly all the Catholics, who were anxious that he should not win his kingdom until he abjured heresy. La Noue alone strenuously urged him to march on Paris, but Henry paid no heed and wasted a valuable fortnight at Mantes.

Paris was in terror. Madame de Montpensier had tried to disguise the magnitude of the disaster by asserting that Henry had been killed in the battle. The story was believed for five or six days, but in April Henry occupied Corbeil and Melun, the gastronomic keys of the capital. At the beginning of May royal artillery was trained on Paris from the hill of Montmartre. Henry established his headquarters in the abbey there, and doubtless enjoyed renewed intimacy with the abbess-elect. On the 9th May the old Cardinal Bourbon, Charles X, died in his prison in Poitou, much to the dismay of Mayenne and to the secret joy of the Spanish agents.

The siege of Paris, which lasted until September, was one of the most ghastly in history. The Duke of

Nemours was in command, Mayenne having gone to seek the aid of the Duke of Parma in the Low Countries. There were nearly 300,000 people in the city and the King's army never numbered more than 15,000, yet he was always able to beat back the sorties of the besieged. The "Sixteen," the body which had taken upon itself to organise the resistance, maintained an iron discipline. Anyone speaking of peace was at once thrown into the river. The clergy tried by their invective to make up for the shortage of food. Sermons alone were free and plentiful. The Jesuit Panigarola told the Duke of Savoy that "the King of Navarre himself has often said that all his ills came from the preachers and priests." The famine was so great that the people ate even the grass in the streets. Dogs, cats and leather hides were eagerly sought. L'Estoile relates that a rich lady salted and ate two of her children who had died. A report ran that the German *lansquenets* used to chase the little children in the streets for food. The Duchess of Montpensier and the Spanish agent, Mendoza, whom Elizabeth of England had expelled from England a few years before, were resourceful as ever. They suggested that the bones of the corpses in the cemeteries might be ground into powder to make bread. It is not surprising that the few who tried "Madame de Montpensier's bread" died of its effects.

In June Henry tried to reduce the city by a series of cannonades, but these proved ineffective. If Henry had neither the power nor the inclination to attempt to take Paris by storm, it could only be won by starvation. Even the blockade was not complete. Many of the royalists had friends within the city.

Givry, who held a position of responsibility, was in love with Mayenne's sister. He allowed large quantities of food to pass into Paris. Henry still refused to attempt to storm the town. He had not the men and above all he was unwilling "to destroy the greatest treasury of the Kingdom"; nor would he risk letting loose the Huguenots to avenge St. Bartholomew on his future subjects. Henry, for all his faults, was nothing if not sympathetic. Hearing that a large number of children and old people were eager to leave, he allowed them to go, though it was contrary to all the rules of war, and many members of his council urged him to refuse permission. He was much moved by the story of their terrible privations. "O, Lord," he said, "Thou knowest who are the causes of this; but give me the means to save those whom the obstinate malice of my enemies would cause to perish. . . . I wonder not at all that the chiefs of the League or the Spaniards have so little compassion for these poor people—they are only tyrants, but, for myself, who am their father and their King, I cannot bear the recital of their calamities without being touched to the bottom of my soul or without ardently desiring to remedy them." As the miserable procession passed through the royalist lines they cried faintly but with feeling: "God Save the King!" Henry was winning the hearts of his people.

On the 30th August Henry had news that Parma had been ordered by Philip II to leave the Netherlands and to relieve Paris. He was at Meaux, north-east of Paris on the Marne. Duplessis-Mornay, Turenne and La Noue begged Henry to make one last attempt to capture Paris before the arrival of the relieving

force. Henry, however, was persuaded by the counsels of the selfish Biron to do nothing. On the 3rd September he sent a herald to Parma and formally demanded battle. Such an action, reminiscent of the age of chivalry, had no effect on Parma, whose master was bent on repaying France for the inconvenience caused to him by Anjou's repeated interventions in the Netherlands. Parma told the herald to inform Henry that he would fight when and where he pleased and that he had not come to consult the King's convenience. There was nothing to be done except to raise the siege in face of a superior army. Henry retired to Senlis.

The Parisians had defended their city with amazing courage and tenacity. If their resolution had failed and Paris had fallen, Henry could have become King of France without adjuring the Protestant faith. Assuming he could have maintained that position, it seems possible that France would in time have become a predominantly Protestant country. The siege of Paris, in 1591, now so little remembered and indeed eclipsed in most men's minds by the siege of 1870, was therefore one of the decisive battles of the world. Henry's failure made it impossible for him to become King without going to mass. Huguenot domination, which appeared imminent enough even to the Catholics in the royal army, was henceforth unthinkable. A modern Catholic writer asserts that the tenacity of the Parisians during the siege saved "Catholic culture" in western Europe. From a purely secular point of view it decided that the balance of power in Europe for centuries to come should be tilted in favour of Catholicism. Hitherto it had seemed that the old and new religions would be evenly

matched. Paris, speaking then, as so often, for the whole of France, decided that Catholicism was to predominate.

Henry was above all a believer in the unity of France. His failure before Paris made union through Protestantism impossible. It made his conversion inevitable, for unity could now come only through common Catholicism. His dream of unity was not to be quite fulfilled in his own lifetime because he was forced to allow the Huguenots to form an *imperium in imperio*. Richelieu, however, was strong enough to suppress their political privileges; and, judged by the standards of his generation, Louis XIV's proscription of their religion was the logical outcome of the policy of his predecessors. Had Henry accepted the advice of La Noue, had Paris been taken, it is possible that Louis XIV would not have been a Catholic at all, and the crime of 1685 would never have been perpetrated. Great therefore were the results of the courage of the Parisians, but be it remembered that it was Parma and his Spaniards who forced Henry to retire. Despite his failure in the Netherlands, Philip II did not serve the Catholic Church in vain.

III

Parma wasted over three weeks besieging the little town of Corbeil, which was gallantly defended by the royalist Bigaud. Mayenne purposely kept the Spaniards short of ammunition, because he distrusted Philip's designs. It was obvious that Parma did not want to defeat Henry. Otherwise he would not

have consistently avoided battle. His sole aim was to strengthen his master's grip on the League and to return to more serious work in the Netherlands. He appreciated the weakness of the League and confessed that he found its members "inconstant and volatile, full of jealousies and divisions, insatiable and ungrateful." Before the end of October he was on his way northwards, having left 8,000 men in Paris with the assurance that he himself would return in the spring.

Parma's intervention had profound results in that it made obvious the divergence between the leaders of the League. The "Sixteen" were ready—and even anxious—to become the vassals of Spain. In September they had sent Philip a formal offer of the throne of France. Mayenne was furious. He was proud of being a Frenchman, and in the end it was his hatred of the treachery of the "Sixteen" that gave Henry his kingdom. He was intimate with Villeroy, a former minister of Henry III, who for some time past had been negotiating with the royalists. Villeroy, though far from being a model of loyalty, saved his country and destroyed the League by refusing to allow Philip any official status in France. Actuated by hatred of Spain, he was able to use Mayenne's ambition to defeat the foreigner. He urged him to make himself king ; but if that were impossible—as it clearly seemed to be—he begged him to negotiate with Henry, "and he will make you Governor of as many provinces as you care to name." There spoke the sixteenth century "patriot," but such were the only arguments calculated to appeal to the leaders of the Holy League. Villeroy's policy triumphed in

December, when Mayenne definitely refused to accept Philip as Protector of the Roman Catholic religion in France. Unfortunately, Spanish protection was to be given whether asked for or not.

Henry appreciated the position of the League and did everything to attract the moderates to his side. He sent for Chiverny, who had been Henry III's chancellor, gave him the seals of office, and in a charming little speech forgave him for his disloyalty. Henry could always make friends, and it was only by making friends of his enemies that he could possess his Kingdom in peace. Elizabeth of England considered his policy of conciliation and clemency absurdly dangerous. "If God should, by His merciful grace," she told him, "grant you victory, I swear to you that it will be more than your *carelessness* deserves."

Elizabeth's head always ruled her heart. With Henry it was the other way about. In November, 1590, he was in Picardy. Bellegarde suggested introducing him to an intimate friend of his, Gabrielle d'Estrées, daughter of Antoine d'Estrées, Governor of La Fère. The meeting took place at the château of Cœuvres, and Henry's sensitive heart was at once set on fire by his friend's eighteen-year-old beauty. Dreux de Radier, a contemporary writer, records that she "was the most lovely woman without dispute in France; her hair was a beautiful ash blonde; her eyes were blue and full of fire; her complexion was like alabaster; her nose aquiline and well-shaped; she had pearly teeth, lips upon which the god of love perpetually dwelt; a stately throat and perfect bust, a slender hand. In short she possessed the deportment of a goddess. Such

were her charms, which none could gaze upon with impunity." Certainly Henry could not. He was terrified lest before he could win her affections, she might give herself to Bellegarde. Accordingly he arranged that she should be married to Nicolas d'Amerval, sieur de Liancourt, an ugly widower with eleven children. Within three months of the marriage, however, he had also arranged for its dissolution. In the meanwhile he contented himself by informing Bellegarde that "neither in war, politics nor love will I tolerate a rival." Bellegarde was sent home, but for the time being Gabrielle freely admitted that she preferred him infinitely to "His Majesty with the grey beard."

In February, 1591, Henry laid siege to Chartres, partly so it was said, to please Gabrielle's uncle, who had formerly been Governor. The siege was so long and arduous that a golden opportunity to take Rouen was lost. When the siege was over in April, Henry hurried to Picardy to receive the congratulations of his mistress. He could not disguise even from her the precariousness of his position, particularly with regard to his own party. The Huguenots were growing ever more dissatisfied, and were demanding that foreign troops from England and Germany should be called to their aid. More serious still was the rise of a "Third Party," composed of moderate Catholics who supported Cardinal Vendôme, nephew of Charles X. Cardinal Bourbon, as he was now called, believed that a heretic had no right to the throne. Accordingly the Kingdom was rightly his, and not Henry's.

This "Third Party" was now indirectly strengthened by the action of Pope Gregory XIV (Nicolas

Sfondrato) who had followed Urban VII, the short-lived successor of Sixtus V. Gregory had been one of the seven cardinals who owed their position to Spanish influence and their wealth to Spanish pay. Disregarding the delegates from the King's party, he allied himself with the "Sixteen." He used the treasure amassed by the thrifty Sixtus to send an army of 12,000 under his nephew, Count Hercules Sfondrato, to support the League. "He accompanied this army," says Bishop Péréfixe, "with a monition or bull of excommunication against the prelates who followed the King." Though the Pope had declared for the League, his fulminations had the effect of increasing the Third Party, whose consciences would allow them neither to fight for a foreign power nor for a heretic King.

The section of the Parlement of Paris which opposed the League now met at Tours. It ordered that the bull should be destroyed by the common scavenger, and issued a decree against the nuncio who had brought it. The main body at Paris thereupon annulled that decree and ordered the bull to be put into effect. Unfortunately for Cardinal Bourbon an assembly of the clergy held at Chartres, mindful of Gallican privileges, refused to support him. Henry was careful to give full publicity to this refusal.

The nuncio brought foreign troops to the League, but this was counterbalanced by the success of Turenne in securing Protestant troops from Germany. Henry was delighted, and as a reward he made him a Marshal of France. In addition he gave him the hand of Charlotte de la Mark, Duchess of Bouillon and sovereign of Sedan. Although a Huguenot,

this lady had been eagerly sought after, both by friendship and force, by the Duke of Nemours and by the Duke of Lorraine, who wanted to marry her to his eldest son. By seeing that Turenne became Duke of Bouillon, Henry put an end to their designs.

Though relieved by the arrival of fresh troops, Henry was more than ever alarmed by the state of the country. France was rapidly going to ruin. Trade was at a standstill. Six years later the Venetian, Duodo, was amazed at the difference between the prosperity of England and the poverty of France owing to the civil wars. "Ten French soldi," he says, "will get a good meal in London; sixty are not enough in France." Small wonder the people were starving. Even the more patriotic nobles—Catholic and Protestant alike—despairing of peace, were aiming at their own independence. The enemies of France were taking advantage of her weakness. The Duke of Savoy, who had occupied the Marquisate of Saluzzo in Piedmont in 1588, was only prevented from annexing Provence by the promptitude and valour of Lesdiguières. Elizabeth of England was demanding Calais in return for her help, niggardly and intermittent though it was. Philip of Spain was, of course, far the most dangerous foreign ruler. He had exacted from the League a promise to call a States-General to elect a King, and he instructed his ambassador to put forward candidates in the following order—his daughter Isabella, himself, his nephew and son-in-law the Archduke Albert, the young Duke of Guise for the moment a prisoner at Tours, and finally the Cardinal of Lorraine. The ambassador was told not to allow any other candidate to be considered. This was too much even for the

League. Rose, Bishop of Senlis, thanked Philip for his help, but told him he must look for his recompense in Heaven.

In July, 1591, Henry, alarmed at the growing hostility between the Protestants and Catholics in his army, attempted to prevent a complete rift by publishing the Declaration of Mantes, which was intended once and for all to solve the religious difficulty. He again professed himself ready to be instructed. He pledged himself to maintain Roman Catholicism as the religion of France. Here, indeed, is an admission of the lesson of the siege of Paris, for it went far beyond anything he had previously promised. On the other hand, he republished the Edicts of 1577 and 1580, which incidentally guaranteed far less to the Huguenots than they had reason to expect. The Declaration thus pleased nobody. The Catholics would not serve a heretic loyally; the Huguenots were unwilling to die for a leader who seemed ready to betray them.

During the greater part of the summer Henry was attempting to put pressure on Paris by cutting off its regular supplies. He had not the men or money to effect a regular siege. Even the blockade was ineffective because his officers at Gournay and St. Denis, at Melun and Corbeil, found it more profitable to tax rather than to stop the provisions destined for Paris. Henry was further weakened by the loss of two staunch supporters—La Noue, who was killed at Lamballe, and François Coligny, who died in October. It seemed that there could be no end to the war.

The League's prospects were no brighter. The resolution of the preachers, it is true, was as

inflexible as ever. Rose—who used to preach at St. Etienne's—was typical of those who refused to consider the possibility of submitting to Henry. "What!" he said. "Is it conceivable that you should receive a tyrant who has so often plunged his arms up to the elbows in the blood of Catholics, and has had priests buried alive up to their necks?" Boucher, who preached at St. Bartholomew's, was of the same mind. "Give us," he cried, "a King who is the son of a man and not a beast; for him whom the politiques demand is the son of a she-wolf." Many of the attacks were even more scurrilous, and some had an element of truth in them. L'Estoile relates that he heard a sermon directed entirely against Henry, in which it was said that "il avait couché avec notre mère l'église et fait Dieu cocu ayant engrossé les abbesses de Montmarte et Poissi." The invective grew as the divisions and weakness of the League became daily more apparent.

In addition to the quarrel between Mayenne and the "Sixteen," a new cause for division was provided by the escape in August, 1591, of the young Duke of Guise, who had been a prisoner since the murder of his father. That he should quarrel with Mayenne was inevitable. He made lavish promises to everyone and, owing to his uncle's failure as a leader, he soon attracted a considerable party to himself. The Spaniards took little notice of him. Thus the League was divided into three factions—one following Mayenne, another the "Sixteen" and the Spaniards, and a third Guise. Henry IV was not mistaken when he remarked that "the escape of Monsieur de Guise will ruin the League."

At the same time the "Sixteen" were giving

way to unparalleled excesses which not only drove Mayenne into open hostility, but did much to alienate their Spanish paymaster. In November, 1591, they ordered the execution of the venerable President Brisson and two counsellors, on the ground that the Parlement of which they were prominent members had pardoned one Brigard, who had corresponded with the royalists. They then proceeded on their own authority to write to Philip, offering the crown to the Infanta. Within a fortnight Mayenne returned to Paris. He seized and executed four of the "Sixteen," and reasserted his authority. He took this step largely to avenge the invitation to Philip, but its effect was to preserve the King's party in Paris, most of which had been marked down for extirpation in the infamous "Papier rouge" of the "Sixteen."

Henry, however, was prevented from taking advantage of the dissensions of the League by the reappearance of Parma. Biron was besieging Rouen with a mixed force which included German, English, Swiss and Dutch besides French troops. The town was gallantly defended by Villars, who, in order to preserve his independence, persistently refused Spanish aid. In these circumstances there is good reason to suppose that Biron could have taken the city, had he been so minded. He was not, for the end of the war would mean the end of his importance. A few months later he rebuked his son for what he considered excessive eagerness to win, with the comment: "How now, do you want to send us to plant cabbages at Biron?"

Parma advanced very slowly to meet Mayenne and the remnant of the papal army that had not already disappeared. Henry unwisely left the neighbourhood of Rouen and attempted to provoke Parma

to battle. Parma was not to be drawn and Henry's manœuvre ended in February, 1592, with an amazingly rash attack on the great general at Aumale. Paying no regard to the advice of his officers and accompanied by only a few hundred men, he attacked the Spanish army. Half his men were killed and he himself was seriously wounded. It was a brave but futile action, of which Parma was justly contemptuous. "I expected to meet a general," he said, "but I only found a captain of freebooters."

Parma successfully relieved Rouen, and again evaded battle. Henry thought that he could not escape this time. He had a considerably superior army and had succeeded in pinning Parma between Yvetot and the Seine. It looked as if the Italian would be compelled to fight his way out. It was, however, not for nothing that he was reputed the greatest general of the age. Though seriously wounded, he transferred his whole army across the Seine by a bridge of boats at Caudebec, where, incidentally, the river is extremely wide. He then marched rapidly along the left bank of the Seine to Charenton. Having placed good Spanish garrisons in Paris and Rouen, he proceeded to march northwards. Mayenne was considerably relieved by his retreat, because he rightly suspected Parma of informing his government that it would find Guise more amenable than his uncle, and therefore more worthy of help. The new garrisons had indeed been installed without his knowledge and contrary to his wishes.

Even the perfidious Biron could not long prevent Henry from pursuing his adversary. In Champagne he paused to take the city of Epernay. On the 26th July while he was viewing the place, Biron was

killed by a cannon ball which entirely severed his head from his body. It is clear that Henry did not realise the extent of his treachery, but the League certainly did. It had often been said that the "Sixteen" could have bought him over if they had been able to satisfy his avarice.

In December, 1592, came the news of Parma's death at Arras. It was a tremendous relief, for it removed the fear of an immediate foreign invasion, while for the future Henry reckoned that the Spaniards would never again have such a general. Henry came to St. Denis, where Villeroy submitted to him a list of the nobles who supported the League, with the price he would have to pay for each. These particular negotiations proved abortive, but they are significant. The Holy League could be bought—but not, it appeared, by a heretic.

IV

To understand Henry's abjuration of the Protestant faith it is necessary to appreciate the political situation. Had Mayenne been able to prevent the meeting of the States-General, which he had long ago promised to convene, and of which the sole object was to elect a King, Henry's conversion to Catholicism would almost certainly have been delayed and might conceivably have been avoided altogether. The doctrines preached by the League were democratic and revolutionary. The struggle was between the precursors of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the believers in the divine right of kings. The former were more active and were supported paradoxically enough by the Catholic Church throughout the greater part of

Europe ; the latter were undoubtedly more numerous, but they refused to rally to the support of a leader who for so long had fought against the predominant religion of the people. The legitimate King, despite his successes, was becoming more and more isolated. The only way in which he could rally the national and patriotic forces to his side and arouse them from their suspicious neutrality was to conform with their religion. Romanism was, it is true, his avowed enemy ; but in Gallicanism he could find the ally which would help him to victory.

On the 26th January, 1593, the States-General met in the great hall of the Louvre. How strong was Henry's hold on the Kingdom was shown by the small number of delegates representing the provinces. The papal legate, acting largely on his own initiative, tried to make the Estates swear never to make peace or to treat with "the Béarnais." His efforts were in vain and the assembly proceeded to consider the request received from Henry's Catholic supporters to enter into negotiations. It was perhaps as well that Henry had been called away to Tours to put an end to the intrigue that was still persisting between the Comte de Soissons and Catherine de Bourbon, for it enabled the more patriotic members of the States-General such as Jeannin and Villeroy to refute the allegations of the Legate and the Spaniard Ibarra that it was sinful for good Catholics to negotiate with a heretic under the ban of the Church. In February it was agreed that a conference should take place at Suresnes, mid-way between St. Germain and Paris, but it was stipulated that there should be no direct negotiation with Henry, and that the subject of religion should not be discussed. Such a compromise was

largely the work of Mayenne, "because," as Bishop Péréfixe put it, "he saw well that the King of Spain desired" (it would have been more accurate to say "would have insisted") "that he who was elected King should espouse his daughter, Isabella Clara Eugenia, and thus the election could not fall upon him, since he was married and had children; but likewise, out of fear lest they should hearken to an acknowledgment of our Henry, he had secretly stirred up some divines to say that a conference with a heretic was unlawful; and by virtue of this advice he had wrought in such manner that the estates agreed they would not confer with him, either directly or indirectly touching his establishment or the doctrine of the faith, but that they would confer with the Catholics among his party, for the good of religion and the public repose."

There is much evidence to show how uncertain Henry was as to the course which he should adopt. For some time he had appreciated the necessity of some understanding with Rome. In the previous summer Cardinal Gondi had gone to Rome to represent the case of the royalist Catholics. Clement VIII, who had been elected Pope at the beginning of the year, had refused to receive them, and in November he had announced his intention of confirming and supporting the election of a King by the States-General. This seriously alarmed Henry. He dreaded the appearance of a rival in France who would be recognised not only by the Pope but by all the Catholic powers of Europe. Accordingly, despite the remonstrances of Duplessis-Mornay, he resolved to open negotiations with Clement on his own account. He sent an ambassador to Rome with a letter which

contained the following passage : " Most Holy Father, As we are resolved to have proffered in our name and to render during our entire life the obedience which we owe to your Holiness and to the Apostolic See, we desire to resume and observe in all things the same means that have been held and employed by the Most Christian Kings, our predecessors, in the observance of the honour and respect due to the Holy Father and the Holy See ; and thus for the purpose of entertaining, together with the filial devotion and reverence belonging to it, the good and perfect understanding which is requisite between the Holy See and the Kings and the Kingdom of France for the universal weal of Christendom and the maintenance therein of the Holy Catholic Church." The Protestantism of a man who could write such a letter could not have been more than skin deep, though it is true that at the same time he sent the Sieur de Maurier to protest to Elizabeth that his religious convictions were unshakable.

The mission was not a success and in the spring of 1593 Henry consulted his friends as to what step he should take. Duplessis-Mornay told him that to abjure would be to commit a deadly sin, but his advice could easily be disregarded as he was far away governing Saumur. " Out of sight out of mind " was often the way with Henry. Aubigné counselled him to stand firm and to win the Kingdom by force, but Henry was too experienced a general to share his optimism. D'O, who with the younger Biron and others formed " the third party " which threatened to set up a French Catholic prince as a rival to Henry, was outspoken as usual. " Sire," he said, " yours is the choice either to satisfy your Gascon ministers or to

be within one month absolute King of all France, deriving greater benefit from one hour's mass than from twenty battles." Henry replied that he had contemplated becoming a Catholic from the moment of his accession, and that he had been sincere in promising to be instructed. Hitherto the Popes and the Protestants had prevented it. It was true. Conversion would have been ineffective during the pontificate of the fiercely Spanish Gregory XIV. Clement VIII was less uncompromising. In addition, he had not been able to risk losing Protestant support while the League was in full vigour.

The man whose advice Henry valued most of all was Rosny. This is undoubtedly true, though it is certain his pronouncements did not carry quite so much weight as the writers of Sully's memoirs believed. Rosny's opinion on this occasion was definite and rational. "To urge you to go to mass," he said, "is not the advice you should expect from me being a Protestant, but I must say that that is the quickest and easiest way to put an end to their plots and dissipate their most evil schemes." Henry scratched his head as was his wont and asked whether he should not consider his faithful Huguenots. The political issue, however, was plain. Either he must embark on an endless war or else he must go to mass and make it perfectly clear that henceforth politics were to dominate religious faith. Henry's justification is that in 1593, after thirty years of religious wars, "faith" had already long ceased to count.

It is less easy to formulate Henry's personal views on religion. It is unfair to assume that he had no religious convictions at all. He would probably have remained a Protestant had his hand not been forced

by political considerations. At the same time Henry was not and never had been a convinced Calvinist. He was temperamentally opposed to the rigid discipline of Geneva. Moreover, for nearly a third of his life he had conformed with the Roman Church. The result of his character and experience was to make him believe that all that was necessary to salvation was a simple belief in Jesus Christ. Few of the Protestant nobles believed that all Catholics were inevitably damned. Henry certainly did not. At a disputation between Catholic and Huguenot divines about this time, one of the ministers admitted that in his view it was possible for a Catholic to find salvation. "What!" cried Henry, "do you agree that one may be saved in the religion of these gentlemen?" "I doubt it not if they live well," was the reply, to which Henry answered: "Prudence advises that I should be of their religion and not of yours, because being of theirs I may be saved both according to their opinion and to yours, but being of yours I can be saved only according to your opinion and not theirs. Prudence therefore teaches me to follow the most assured." This disappointing but logical argument was typical of Henry and the generation that was well versed in Montaigne's gospel of indifference and doubt. It is wrong to portray Henry as an agnostic or an atheist. He believed in God, and he said that "the difference between the two religions has only become so great through the animosity of the preachers and that by my own authority I can put an end to their quarrels." He told Villeroy as much in 1590: "I am not obstinate. I wish to yield to the truth and to the wishes of my subjects, but I will not be instructed at the point of the sword."

Such was Henry's state of mind when he resolved to abjure his religion. The League had lost its force despite the doubloons lavishly squandered by Philip II's ambassador to secure the election of a Spanish King. Conversion would win to him all the moderates in Paris and elsewhere. He reckoned that the Huguenots would not become actively disloyal to one who had done so much for them. When their ministers protested at his approaching betrayal he was manifestly touched. D'Amours threatened him with the wrath of God. He answered d'O's protests against such insolence, by saying most humbly, "*Que voulez-vous ? Il m'a dit mes vérités.*" Henry knew full well that he was deserting his companions of Jarnac and Martcontour, of Arques and of Ivry. That he was loth to do so was obvious. "You know," he told them, "what I have always said ; but (if I turn Catholic) you will have no reason for alarm or anxiety ; on the contrary, I enter that house not to dwell there but to cleanse it ; and as regards yourselves I will give you no worse treatment than I have always given you until to-day. Pray God for me, and I shall be your leader still."

The conference at Suresnes, which in fact only met at the end of April, was accompanied by a most welcome truce. In May Henry summoned the archbishops and bishops to instruct him. Meanwhile the Spaniards were pressing the Estates to elect a King. In order to postpone the election Villeroy persuaded the Parlement—or such of its members as remained in Paris—to make a pronouncement against all who attacked the Salic law, and declaring null all treaties made or about to be made which should be contrary to the fundamental laws of the Kingdom. A further

delay was caused by the refusal of the League to renew the truce. Henry took advantage of their obstinacy to capture Dreux, their only remaining stronghold in the neighbourhood of Paris. Mayenne and his wife were now openly hostile to the Spaniards, who were vehemently urging the election of Guise. Even Mayenne found his lawful King preferable to his faithless nephew.

Henry's long promised instruction began in the early days of July. The Catholics found him "well instructed in his error." Henry could always hold his own in argument, and though it was obvious that in the end he was going to yield he enjoyed what was outwardly a solemn debate. He alleged that he was not satisfied on the doctrines of purgatory and the adoration of the sacrament. He told his instructors that they failed to convince him as they had promised. Finally he ended the discussion by saying : "*Voici je mets aujourd'hui mon âme entre vos mains.*"

Henry's confession of his new faith was scanty enough. It made no mention of the disputed doctrines. It is said that Loménie concocted a more elaborate document to send to the Pope. Despite any doctrinal waywardness the King had expressed himself willing to conform. For Henry it meant escape from the lectures of d'Amours. For France it meant peace and ultimately the complete secularisation of politics. The "age of faith" was over at last.

Henry was to be received back into the fold in the abbey church of St. Denis. He was undoubtedly nervous. On the 23rd July he wrote to Gabrielle : "*ce sera dimanche que je ferai le saut périlleux.*" When Elizabeth heard the news she remarked that it was a dangerous thing to do evil that good might

come. Time alone would show whether Henry's conversion would have the desired effect of rallying the whole nation to the support of their King.

The area round the capital was wild with excitement. The clergy of the League threatened all who attended the ceremony with instant excommunication. They asserted that even if Henry received absolution from a French prelate he would still be under the Pope's ban. Sixtus V's bull, though it had not been received by some of the bishops, had never been officially withdrawn. Henry's conversion in fact made him the champion of Gallicanism and the enemy of Romanism. He was to be a national King.

On the Saturday evening, we are told, the King took one of his rare baths, and before he rose the next morning he received the Huguenot minister La Faye, to whom he spoke tenderly and promised always to protect the Protestant religion. Dressed in a white satin doublet with a black cloak and plumed hat Henry went through streets decked with flowers and lined with Scottish and Swiss soldiers to the Abbey church of St. Denis. The people were rapturous in their applause. Peace was in sight at last and certainly the Béarnais was a fine figure of a man. He was of medium height, small-boned and wiry ; his nose was long and hooked ; his curly hair and beard were long since grey. He had the glittering eye associated by writers of romance with the inveterate gambler and ladykiller.

Six prelates were to take part in the ceremony—the Archbishop of Bourges—sometime Chancellor of Henry's old play-fellow and enemy, Anjou—the Bishops of Nantes, Chartres and le Mans, the Bishop designate of Evreux, and the young Cardinal

Bourbon, nephew of "Charles X," who was not in the best of tempers, as he had privately hoped that the Spaniards would make him King. The Archbishop sat on a throne covered with white damask on which were embroidered the arms of France and Navarre; Cardinal Bourbon, the Bishops and the monks of St. Denis waited with the cross, the Gospels, and the holy water. On Henry's arrival the Archbishop asked him; "Who are you?" Henry replied: "I am the King." "What is your wish?" said the Archbishop. "I ask to be received into the fold of the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church. I protest and swear before the face of Almighty God to live and die in the Roman Catholic religion: to protect and defend it against all at the risk of my life and limb, renouncing all heresies contrary to it." Henry then kissed the Archbishop's ring and received absolution, which was understood to be conditional on his asking the Pope's approval of what had been done. After the Benediction, the King entered the choir, and, during the singing of a solemn *Te Deum*, made his confession behind the altar. The Bishop of Nantes celebrated mass, after which Henry left the Church and was received with acclamation by the people, to whom largesse was liberally thrown. France again had a Catholic King, but Spain, the Pope and the League had yet to be finally defeated.

Had Henry obtained papal absolution at this juncture, France might have been spared nearly two years of spasmodic civil war. He sent Louis Gonzaga, Duke of Nevers, to solicit the Pope's approval, and a truce was agreed with the League while awaiting the reply. Clement VIII, though

he had no desire to serve Philip, was unwilling to incur his anger. Moreover, he was terrified that Henry might be deceiving him, and that he would return once again to Protestantism. The greater part of the Curia was still averse to the French. It was commonly said that Henry, being a relapsed heretic, could not receive absolution even from the Pope himself. The men who were engaged in entreating his forgiveness were still bent on resisting the claims of the Roman Church. The Pope himself called them "rebels to the crown and church, bastards, the children of the bond-woman and not of the wife, while the Lcaguers have proved themselves the true sons."

The Duke of Nevers, who expected to be received with joy, was bitterly disappointed at his treatment in Rome. The Pope refused to regard him as an ambassador from Henry, and treated him simply as a private nobleman. "Nothing remains to me," said he to the Cardinal Toledo, by whom he was informed of the Pope's determination, "but to lament the misfortunes that France will have to endure from the rage of the soldiery, when the war breaks forth anew." The Cardinal did not reply. Such a plea meant nothing to the Roman Curia.

It was characteristic of Clement that while in public he doggedly refused to countenance Henry's return to Catholicism, yet, in private, he allowed the Grand Duke of Tuscany to understand that he would make no objection to anything the French clergy might decide to do. The Grand Duke was also authorised to communicate favourable expressions on the part of the Pope to the chiefs of the

Catholic royalists. But the opportunity had been missed. Nevcrs had returned to France. The truce was at an end. The sword was drawn once more.

In this war Henry found that his conversion, even without the papal absolution, had not been in vain. The opposition was shaken irreparably, and was willing to be bought. After unsatisfactory conferences with the Huguenots at Dieppe, Henry was cheered by Vitri's surrender to him of the city of Meaux. Incidentally, Vitri's action was prompted by the discontinuance of the Spanish subsidies, but Henry was not the man to emphasise the sordid motives of a new ally. "My friends," he told the people, "I do not receive you as enemies, but as my subjects; and I embrace you all, as would a good father his children." Meaux was followed by Orléans and Bourges. Before Christmas, Villeroy made his peace. His action created a great stir. He was known to be a bigoted Catholic, and he was popularly supposed to have had a hand in the murder of Henry III. Some thought that Villeroy's defection meant the defeat of the League, but popular versc-mongers saw in it the defeat of all Henry's previous aspirations. There was much in their argument :

"Le roi n'a pu vaincre la Ligue,
Il n'appartient qu'à Villeroy,
Qui a si bien conduit sa brigade
Qu'en fin la Ligue a pris le roi."

Villeroy came over on his own terms, but for Henry the end of his struggle was at last in sight.

Everything—even the papal absolution—now turned on the attitude of Paris.

Henry had friends in Paris, but he realised that they could only work slowly. Belin has been superseded as Governor by Brissac, because Mayenne supposed him to be even more fanatically opposed to Henry. Fortunately for France, he was mistaken. Henry also hoped to find a friend in Le Maistre, who had followed the martyred Brisson as President of the Parlement. In the meantime, he determined to have a formal coronation. Few Frenchmen would willingly fight against a Catholic and anointed King. The traditional place for the ceremony was Rheims, where was kept the miraculous oil which an angel had given to St. Remigius for the coronation of Clovis. Unfortunately, Rheims was in the hands of the Leaguers, but Henry luckily remembered that another angel had given some holy oil to Saint Martin, which was preserved in the Cathedral of the loyal city of Chartres. On the 27th February, Henry was crowned there with all the traditional pomp of the French monarchy. The oath he took included a passage often overlooked by Protestant historians. Henry swore, as had his predecessors, "from my country and all my jurisdiction I will honestly and with all my powers try to exterminate all heretics denounced by the Church."

The news of the coronation was welcomed in Paris. Though outwardly the League was still dominant, many of the principal citizens had, during the truce, been won over to Henry by de Vic, Governor of St. Denis, and were only waiting an opportunity to declare themselves. Brissac and Le Maistre found allies in L'Huillier, the *prévôt des*

marchands, and L'Anglois, an *échevin*, who was later to be the agent in Paris of Margaret of Valois. These men were certainly not actuated by any high motives of loyalty. They appreciated that Henry was now ready to pay a bigger price than the League or Spain could offer. Nevertheless, their task was fraught with danger. They were fortunate in that Mayenne, who was now suffering abominably from sciatica in addition to his other misfortunes, chose this moment to leave the city. They were further encouraged by the news that on the 17th March, 1594, Rouen had surrendered, and that Henry had thereby secured all Normandy.

On the night of the 21st-22nd March, the King lay near Paris. He had been told that during the night the Porte Neuve, close by the Tuileries—whence Henry III had made his inglorious escape on the day of the Barricades—would be opened to his men, as would also the Porte St. Denis. At four o'clock on that foggy wet morning a detachment of his army passed through the Porte Neuve, and advanced alongside the Seine without encountering any opposition until it arrived at the Quai de l'Ecole. There the resistance of twenty-five or thirty *lansquenets* was rapidly overcome, and they were duly thrown into the river. Another body of royalists, advancing from the Porte St. Denis, arrived at the Châtelet without meeting any resistance. At six, Henry, assured of his safety, entered Paris from the west, and rode along the Rue St. Honoré, across the river to the Ile de la Cité and Notre Dame. There was a tremendous crowd in front of the Cathedral. Many tried to touch his stirrup, and all frantically acclaimed him. Henry told his men not to drive

them off: "Affamés comme ils sont," as he said, "de voir un roy." Received at the door of the Cathedral by the clergy, he heard mass, which was followed by a joyous *Te Deum*. Such was the triumph of the Protestant Hero.

He dined at the Louvre, which he had not entered for eighteen grim years, and in the afternoon went in high good humour to a window above the Porte St. Denis, from which he watched the departure of the Spaniards. Mischievous and undignified as ever, he laughingly imitated their courtly bows: "Good-bye, gentlemen," he cried, "commend me to your master! But mind you don't come back!"

During the next few weeks Henry was happy and he charmed the Parisians who had so long thwarted him. He wished, he said, "only to appear to his subjects as a good father, who was anxious to embrace his children as soon as they returned to their duty." He mixed freely with the people. One day "an old woman of more than eighty threw herself on his neck and kissed him." He laughed and joked at everything, even his financial position which was indeed alarming. "I fear," he said, "that very soon I shall have to go about quite naked." One day, when he was playing tennis, he appeared in a tattered shirt and ancient worn-out trousers. Only once did he attempt royal splendour, and that was six months later, on the day of official rejoicing for his entry into the city. "On that day," says L'Estoile, "he entered Paris by torch-light, between seven and eight o'clock in the evening. He rode a grey horse and wore a grey velvet coat ornamented with gold, with a grey hat and white plume. . . . The members of the Parlement in their red

robes awaited him at Notre Dame, where a *Te Deum* was sung. It was eight o'clock when His Majesty crossed the pont Notre Dame, accompanied by a great number of horsemen and magnificently attired nobles. The King, laughing continually, and well pleased at seeing all the people wholeheartedly crying '*Vive le Roi,*' had his hat in his hand almost all the time, chiefly to salute the ladies at the windows."

Henry had won at last, but it was not a Huguenot triumph. Soon after his entry he supped with Mesdames de Nemours and de Montpensier, the very people who had most successfully inspired the opposition to himself. He lavished favours on converted leaguers, for he had no option. Brissac had exacted his reward. He was made Marshal of France, in addition to which he received 30,000 livres and a pension for his work in the surrender of Paris. 'Someone told the King that "That which is Cæsar's has been given to Cæsar."' "Given?" said Henry, looking at Brissac. "No, sold; and for a goodly price." He was compelled to forget his old friends. He was King, but he had abjured Protestant principles. His victory would have been odious to Jeanne d'Albret and to Coligny. Catholicism had proved too strong.

V

Henry had bought Paris by going to mass, and Paris gave him France. But France in 1594 was

no rich heritage. The confusion was indescribable. The misery of the people touched hearts far less sensitive than Henry's. The bulk of the nobles had still to be bought. The wounds inflicted by the civil wars were not to be healed in Henry's lifetime. Nor was he as yet master of the whole country. Mayenne, with Spanish troops, occupied Guyenne. Champagne was held by Guise and coveted by Lorraine, who was already in possession of Metz, Toul and Verdun, the three bishoprics conquered by Henry II. The Duke of Savoy was threatening Dauphiné, and was already master of much of Provence. Marseilles was an independent republic under the protection of Spain, as was Lyons under that of the Duke of Nemours. The Pope was advised that the time was ripe to extend his rule from Avignon to the greater part of Provence. Villars exercised independent rule in Guienne. Mercœur, a relation of Guise, supported by Spain was bent on making himself independent in Brittany. The position was further complicated by peasant risings in many parts of France, especially in Limousin, Poitou and Quercy. These were spontaneous and isolated movements induced by famine and misery. Henry's attitude to them was characteristically generous. "If I were not what I am," he said, "and had more time, I would willingly be a Croquant."* It was not the common people who were the King's enemies.

Despite the overwhelming difficulties to be faced, the hour had come for the revival of the French

* The peasants who took part in these movements were called Croquants—a name derived from Croc, a parish in Limousin, where one of the first risings began.

monarchy, and the hour had brought the man. Moreover, Henry was fortunate in that he was the first of a new line. He was not burdened by the hatred and contempt incurred by the vices of the later Valois. He had to pay for their immense extravagance and correct their terrible mistakes, but he never suffered from their unpopularity. Gradually royalism became the fashion. Republicanism was for nearly two centuries discredited, abandoned by the Huguenots and stamped out with the League. Henry defeated both reaction and revolution, but the process was long and painful.

The League was taking an unconscionable time in dying. In Picardy it was still fairly strong, largely owing to the aid of foreign allies. Henry resolved to strike, and in June, 1594, laid siege to Laon. His activity was amazing, and it is not surprising that his exertions on the mountains caused him to suffer severely from blisters. Though he trusted neither the Catholic Biron nor the Protestant Bouillon, the royalists were successful in capturing the town. This success led the people of Amiens to drive out the Duke of Aumale, and to surrender to the King. Thus it became impossible for the Spaniards to send troops from the Netherlands direct to their supporters in France. It was probably this fact that led Guise to abandon Mayenne and to make peace with the King, bringing with him the cities of Rheims and Vitry. His reward was, of course, substantial. He was given the government of Provence, which, it was understood, he would have to recover by force of arms from Epervan. Guise was worth buying, because his surrender made a breach in the united front of

the House of Guisc-Lorraine. Henry told the young Duke that though he and his father had been "rivals in love and several other designs and pretensions," they had been good friends in their youth.

Guise's example was soon to be followed by Lorraine, so that Mercœur and Mayenne were almost alone in their opposition; but Spanish intrigues all over the country were still a constant menace. The Huguenot problem was still unsolved. Their political assembly, held in July at St. Foy, showed that they regarded Henry with scarcely veiled hostility, and his Edict of Pacification in November did little to appease their resentment. The King could not yet afford to risk offending his Catholic subjects, for the genuineness of his conversion was still suspect. One day, when he was sitting in an inn while travelling incognito as was his wont, he overheard an old man discussing the subject and declaring with conviction: "You can't teach an old dog new tricks."

Not only was the King an object of suspicion, but he went daily in peril of his life. The year before, at Melun, a soldier named Pierre Barrière had attempted to assassinate him. He had been detected and, according to the custom of the times, he had been "condemned to have his right hand burned, holding the knife with which he would have struck the King, and afterwards to have his flesh torn off with red-hot pincers, and to be broken on the wheel alive." Henry, though brave to fool-hardiness on the field, was terrified of the assassin's knife.

He sought consolation in his Gabrielle who, during the siege of Laon, had borne him her first

child, César, to whom Henry was devoted. Gabrielle was again in the best of health, and was constantly out hunting with him. On one occasion in this winter of 1594-5 it is reported that she was dressed all in green, and was seen riding hand-in-hand with Henry in the midst of a terrible storm. Henry, because he lived in constant fear of sudden death, put all the intensity of his being into his love. For Gabrielle he wrote these charming lines :

Viens Aurore
 Je t'implore,
 Je suis gai quand je te vois :
 La bergère
 Qui m'est chère
 Est vermeille comme toi.

Elle est blonde
 Sans seconde
 Elle a la taille à la main.
 Sa prunelle
 Etincelle
 Comme l'astre du matin.

De rosée
 Arrosée
 La rose a moins de fraîcheur
 Une hermine
 Est moins fine
 Le lis a moins de blancheur.

Just after Christmas, 1594, Henry was as usual in Gabrielle's room. Coming in with a crowd of courtiers, a young scholar named Jean Chastel—who was then about nineteen years of age—tried to murder the King. Fortunately, at the moment he was about to strike, Henry bent forward with the result that the knife struck him on the upper lip instead of on his body. Soissons, who incidentally

was still vainly seeking the hand of Catherine de Bourbon, seized him, and though Henry at once pardoned him, had him removed to prison.

Chastel was examined in the usual manner of those barbarous times. Torture made him speak. The instigators of the crime must have been sorry that Chastel had not been immediately silenced as had the murderer of Henry III. The youth had been brought up by the Jesuits, and he admitted that he had often heard them declare that a man might lawfully slay a King who was not reconciled to the Church. This was the old doctrine of tyrannicide so fully expounded by the Jesuit Mariana. It was too dangerous for Henry to tolerate. Chastel himself was rapidly dealt with. His right hand was first burnt off; he was then torn to pieces by four horses, and finally his body was burnt amid the plaudits of the mob. The event, however, was too serious to be dismissed in such a simple manner. Henry began to fear that his abject submission to the Pope had not been so efficacious as he had hoped. His Protestant friends were not slow to point the moral. "Sire," said Aubigné, blunt and outspoken as usual, "God whom as yet you have abandoned only with your lips has contented Himself with piercing your lips. But when your heart shall have renounced Him He will pierce your heart."

Henry appreciated that reconciliation with the Pope would probably come but it could not be hurried. At the same time he felt that he must deal with the Jesuits at once. Their hold on the great towns was formidable, and so long as they remained preaching their disloyal doctrines, peace was impossible. Already, in May, 1594, the Rector of the Sorbonne

had begged the Parlement to order all Jesuits to depart from France. Now Henry resolved to act. It was far from clear that the Jesuits had actually instigated Chastel to the crime, and their apologists were, as usual, clever in their denials of complicity. However, the opportunity was too good to be missed. The whole society was banished from the realm of France, and a pyramid recording the event was erected opposite the Louvre on the site of the house once occupied by the parents of Jean Chastel. L'Estoile records that the whole business was very bad for trade.

Although the royalist cause was greatly helped by the expulsion of the Jesuits, Henry realised that he could never be secure so long as the country was infested with Spanish agents. He knew that there were Spaniards behind every plot and that it was possible for every rebellious town and province to secure Spanish money and Spanish protection. War was for once a necessity. The only question was whether Henry was strong enough to attack the greatest military power in Europe. As usual, he had no money. D'O, who had been *Surintendant des finances*, was recently dead. The French have always been unsuccessful in financial administration, and d'O was among the most incompetent of all French administrators. Sancy expected to succeed him, but he had to contend with all the influence of Gabrielle, who hated him because he had spoken slightly of her and her son César. After much intrigue, in which the jealousy of his rivals prevented the King from appointing his friend Rosny, a *conseil des finances* was set up under the Duke of Nevers. It was not a body to inspire confidence, and no money seemed to be forthcoming. Henry, however, had never known

what it was to have a full treasury, and financial considerations did not weigh heavily upon him. Though his army was ill-disciplined and the Spaniards were well established in Brittany, Henry, as would be expected, resolved to take the risk.

On the 17th January, 1595, he declared war on Spain.

VI

The major operations of the war were fought in the east. Dijon declared for the King, and Biron set out to besiege the castle, which was for the most part garrisoned by Spaniards. On the 28th May the castle fell, and this enabled the King to pursue his campaign with greater vigour in Franche Comté whither the Constable of Castille had led a great army of Milanese. Mayenne had joined the Constable, and their combined armies far outnumbered the royalists. It is somewhat surprising that the really decisive engagement of the campaign was a mere skirmish fought in June, 1595. At Fontaine-Française Henry, supported by only about a hundred gentlemen, with amazing rashness and bravery successfully attacked a force many times larger. The young Biron had sent for the King in the erroneous belief that the main Spanish army was many miles away. He discovered too late that his information was faulty. "Would I were dead," he cried, "I have sent for the King and here is the whole Spanish army." The Constable of Castille could not believe that the King would attack him with such a contemptible force, and feared a trap. The result of the fight was that the invasion was checked and that Mayenne became

utterly disgusted with the Spanish management of the war. Henry, however, cannot be excused for running such a tremendous personal risk. The King was in such great danger that he himself said to his sister Catherine that many a time he had fought for victory but on this occasion he had fought for his very life.

Henry's success was substantial in that Mayenne decided to withdraw from the conflict, and was granted a truce pending a formal treaty between the King and his rebellious but now very sick subject. The news that Fuentes had captured Doullens and Cambrai came as a severe blow to Henry. The misfortune, however, was more than counterbalanced by an intimation from Rome that the Pope was at last prepared to give Henry formal absolution. Clement VIII was not a bigot. He had always sought to avoid driving Henry to extremes, for he foresaw the possibility that Henry IV of France might emulate the example of Henry VIII of England, and that another country might be lost to the Holy See.

In September Clement VIII pronounced his terms. They were mild, not because he loved Henry, whom he still regarded as a relapsed heretic, but because he dreaded a Gallican schism. The King's cause had been argued by D'Ossat and Du Perron, who were shortly afterwards made Cardinals. Their arguments had received much support from certain Jesuit fathers. The Jesuits have always possessed political insight. Until their expulsion from France they had supported Spain. Since then they had been quick to realise that the day of Spanish ascendancy in France was over and that their only chance of returning lay in earning the gratitude of the King they had sought to kill. Henry had written to the Pope in more humble

terms than he had used before : " the King beseeches you in all humility by the bowels of Our Lord Jesus Christ that you deign to confer upon him your holy blessing and supreme absolution." Clement intimated that he would do so on three conditions, namely, that the practice of the Roman Catholic religion should be permitted in Béarn ; that young Condé, the son of Henry's cousin, should be educated as a Catholic ; and, thirdly, that Henry should agree to the introduction into France of the Decrees of the Council of Trent " so far as compatible with the laws of the Kingdom." The qualification made the condition almost valueless, for it could without difficulty be construed as meaning " so far as the King thought fit." The formal ceremony of absolution took place on the 17th December, 1595.

Meanwhile the siege of Calais was giving rise to extreme anxiety. Henry tried to relieve the city by sending a fleet to succour it from Boulogne, but on two occasions it was driven back by storms. Eventually a force did reach the city, but it put up little resistance, and some months later (April, 1596) the town surrendered to the Spaniards. This disaster was in some measure counterbalanced by the recapture of La Fère in Picardy, which Colas, its Leaguer governor, had delivered to the enemy. Henry gave his infant son César the title of governor of the city. Gabrielle was delighted. The siege had been no easy matter, as Henry was pitifully short of supplies. He wrote to Rosny : " I have hardly a horse on which to fight, nor a complete harness to put on my back ; my shirts are all torn, my coats are out at the elbow, and for the last two days I have had to sup with others." It is only in the light of such statements

that the magnitude of Rosny's financial achievements can be appreciated.

Towards the end of January, 1596, Mayenne made his peace. Henry had already told Lignerac, one of the Duke's closest friends, that he was ready to grant favourable terms, and in addition Mayenne knew that Gabrielle would use her influence on his behalf. The meeting between the King and Mayenne was a curious one. Henry embraced the Duke cordially and then indulged in one of his practical jokes, which this time took the form of making the aged and rheumatic Mayenne walk with him at a prodigious pace up and down the garden. Mayenne was soon exhausted. The King said to Rosny : " One more turn and I shall have punished this fat fellow for all the trouble he has given us," and to Mayenne : " Confess, sir, I am going a little fast for you." " Sire, it is true," replied Mayenne. " if you go on, you will kill me." Henry laughed uproariously and answered : " Shake hands for God's truth. This is all the ill you need ever fear from me." Gabrielle was delighted at the reconciliation, for Mayenne had already promised to support César's claim to the throne in the event of Henry's death.

Henry had, of course, to pay for Mayenne's loyalty. He gave him Châlons, Seure and Soissons as places of security for six years. He paid his debts and made him Governor of the Ile de France. Mayenne's example was followed by Epernon, whose price Henry was compelled to pay with church benefices, thus making the confusion of the French church worse confounded. Another Leaguer, Joyeuse, the elder brother of the former Duke, who had spent most of his life as a Capuchin monk, likewise made his peace,

and in return was made a marshal of France and governor of Languedoc. These submissions, valuable though they were, impoverished Henry, and in some degree made his administration dependent on his old enemies, but it was only by separate treaties that he could hope to overcome the coalition that opposed him. "I would rather," he told Rosny, "it cost me twice as much treating separately with each individual than arriving at the same result by a general treaty with one leader."

In February came the good news that the inhabitants of Marseilles had risen against the governors, who were about to deliver the city to the Spaniards, and had placed themselves under the protection of the King. In May Henry persuaded England and the United Provinces to enter into a Triple Alliance against Spain. Elizabeth was at last brought into open war. The parties bound themselves not to enter into a separate peace. Oddly enough it was Henry and not Elizabeth who was to break the pledge.

By the autumn of 1596 Henry realised that he was face to face with bankruptcy. He therefore resolved to seek the aid of an assembly of notables, there being no time to convoke a formal States-General. On the 4th November the peers, prelates and officers of justice and revenue met at Rouen in the great hall of the Abbey of St. Ouen. There on a throne beneath a canopy of state Henry addressed the assembly. "If I accounted it a glory," he said, "to pass for an excellent orator, I should have brought hither rather good words than good-will ; but my ambition tends to something higher than well-speaking. I aspire to those glorious titles of Liberator and Restorer of

France. . . . I have not called you hither as my predecessors did to force you blindly to approve my will. I have caused you to be assembled to receive your counsels, to believe them, to follow them, and in a word to put myself in guardianship under your hands. This is a desire that seldom possesses Kings grey-bearded and victorious like myself ; but the love I bear my subjects and the extreme desire I have to preserve my state makes me find all things easy and honourable."

It is hardly necessary to say Henry had no intention of surrendering any of his authority. He told Gabrielle that though he had spoken thus, he intended to retain his sword by his side, but his speech won the hearts of the assembly. Indeed, the whole of France was weary. There was no call for reforms. The universal cry was for strong government and not for liberty. The assembly ordered that one year's payment of all officers' salaries should be collected for the King, and ordered a tax of five per cent. on all goods other than corn entering walled cities. This was the famous "*pancarte*" which excited such opposition that it soon had to be withdrawn. In the meanwhile, however, Rosny, who had recently become *Surintendant des finances*, largely through the influence of Gabrielle, undertook his first financial inquisition, which brought a very large sum into the Treasury.

The year 1597 opened badly. Henry was suffering from a fever. This he cured contrary to all medical advice by eating a vast quantity of oysters. No sooner had he recovered than he heard that Amiens had been recaptured by the Spaniards. A handful of soldiers disguised as peasants under the governor of

Doullens, contrived to enter the town when the bulk of the garrison was at mass at 9 o'clock in the morning of the 12th March. The news arrived at the Louvre about half-past three in the morning. That evening there had been a ballet in honour of the baptism of the young Monsieur de Montmorency. Rosny tells us that he was awoken by Beringuen, who appeared to be quite distracted. "In God's name, what can have happened that is so urgent?" asked Rosny, "is the King ill?" "No, sir, but he is more angry and furious with certain people than I have ever seen him. You are to go to him at once." Henry was raging against the stupidity and incompetence of the garrison. "What am I to do?" "Retake Amiens," said Rosny. "You are right. I have been King of France enough. It is time now to be King of Navarre."

Soon afterwards he took a tender farewell of Gabrielle and hurried northwards, leaving Rosny to collect men and money for the campaign. It was essential that Amiens should be retaken, for besides its strategical importance every reverse suffered by Henry encouraged Mercoeur, who was in open rebellion in Brittany, and the Huguenots, whose discontent at what they considered a betrayal was becoming alarming. The reduction of Amiens was a long business, and Henry was constantly diverted by other matters. Indeed Henry's ultimate success was due mainly to the fact that the Spanish army was mutinous and short of supplies, whereas the French, thanks to the efforts of Rosny, was for the first time well paid. It is significant, however, that though Henry's army included 6,000 English and Dutch, there were no Huguenots in its

ranks. Henry had long ceased to be the Protestant leader, and he had not been able to follow Duplessis-Mornay's advice to establish himself as the Protestant Protector.

Henry's discontented subjects were not slow to take advantage of his embarrassments. In May Auvergne and Tavannes left the Court and tried to organise a rebellion, but it came to nothing and they were eventually pardoned. Henry was too busy to deal with them. In June Elizabeth demanded Calais as the price of her help. Henry was indignant. "I would rather be skinned by my foes," he said, "than be scratched by my friends." Then there was a little trouble with his beloved Gabrielle. During the siege of Amiens the office of Grand Master of the Artillery fell vacant. Gabrielle was most anxious to secure the prize for her father, but Henry wanted it for Rosny, whom he knew would, contrary to the usual custom, work hard for the rich emoluments of the office. But Henry was still deeply in love with her. He was delighted with a daughter she had borne him in November, 1596, whom he christened Gabrielle Henriette. To compensate his mistress for her disappointment on account of her father, Henry bought for her the duchy of Beaufort. Now she became Duchesse de Beaufort. It was not too much to hope that her next step would be to become Queen of France.

Far more alarming than his difficulties with his rebellious nobles, his grasping ally and his mistress, was the threatening attitude now adopted by the Huguenots. Each year they had been holding their political assemblies—in 1595 at Saumur, in 1596 at Loudun and in 1597 at Châtellerault. At each

meeting the Huguenots expressed their bitter discontent that Henry still refused to grant them an edict of complete toleration. It is true that immediately after the declaration of war against Spain Henry had formally renewed the Edicts of Fleix and Nérac which had originally been promulgated by Henry III in 1580. The King persistently assured them that their claims were not forgotten and that in due course they would have their edict. But though his promises were many he did nothing. He feared a struggle with the Parlement of Paris, that close corporation of legal officers, whose duty it was to register the King's edicts and who not infrequently refused to do so save under coercion. The renewal of the old edicts had caused a violent discussion in the Parlement, and their registration had only been carried by fifty-nine votes to fifty-three. Henry was no longer dependent on the Huguenots and he dared not provoke a constitutional conflict during the critical stages of the war. At the same time he knew that if they could find a new leader they would not be slow to rebel against him, who had once been their saviour. The Protestant question could not be shelved indefinitely.

In the meanwhile the recapture of Amiens was a necessity. Philip II was old and very ill, and it seemed likely that he would not be reluctant to come to terms. Operations against the city were seriously impeded by the efforts of the Archduke Albert to raise the siege. On one occasion he nearly succeeded. Henry was out hunting, and on his return he found his army in a state verging on panic, but he at once gained control and, hastily drawing up his forces, offered in a tone which could

be heard by many this prayer: "O Lord, if it be to-day Thou wilt punish me as my sins deserve, I offer my head to Thy justice; spare not the culpable, but, Lord, for Thy holy mercy's sake, take pity on the poor Kingdom, and smite not the flock for the offence of the shepherd." The attack was beaten off, and eventually, after the commander had been killed, the city capitulated on the 25th September, 1597.

After advancing vainly as far as Arras, Henry retired for a brief visit to Paris, and then set out for Brittany where he hoped to deal with the Duke of Mercœur, the last of the House of Lorraine to oppose him. Rosny hoped that Henry would make an example of him, and was profoundly disquieted when he heard that the King was going to meet the Duchess at Angers. The Duke realised that further opposition without Spanish aid was impossible, and Madame de Mercœur knew of a way well calculated to win Henry's clemency. Gabrielle was with Henry and, though the birth of her third child was imminent, the Court had never been more gay and lively. Madame de Mercœur suggested a marriage between her only daughter, Françoise de Lorraine, and Gabrielle's elder son, César. The girl was six years of age and César four. Henry liked the idea of such a rich and noble marriage for his son, and as he never bore malice, was willing to pardon Mercœur. The betrothal was celebrated with the same magnificence as if César had been a legitimate son of France. To mark the occasion Henry created the child Duke of Vendôme. The marriage was ultimately solemnised in July, 1609, when César was just seventeen years old.

Meanwhile negotiations were going on between the envoys of France and Spain, under the mediation of Clement VIII, at the little town of Vervins. Both sides were heartily tired of the war, and it was not long before an agreement was reached. Philip, tortured by malignant tumours, realised that his end was near, and that where he had failed his son was unlikely to succeed. The day before the peace was signed Henry remarked with truth that both France and her King needed to regain their breath. The terms of the treaty were not elaborate ; Spain evacuated all the conquests she had made with the exception of Cambrai. The Duke of Savoy came to terms at the same time. He surrendered his remaining hold on Provence, while the question of Saluzzo, which had been ceded to France in 1559 and seized by Savoy in 1588, was referred to the arbitration of the Pope.

Although the Treaty contained a provision that England and the Dutch might become parties within six months, there can be no doubt that Henry thereby broke his promise not to enter into a separate peace. His only excuse was necessity and the obduracy of his allies. Long ago it had been said that the misery of France was the best ally of Spain. Once Spain consented to withdraw there seemed no reason for Henry to compel his bankrupt country, which had not known real peace for more than a generation, to continue a profitless war. As for his allies, Elizabeth herself never let inconvenient promises interfere with her policy, and in addition she had been suggesting to Philip that he should cede Calais to her in exchange for the Dutch towns of Brill and Flushing, which she held as security

for her loans. The Dutch refused to enter into any treaty which did not recognise their independence. Henry considered he had enough to do as restorer of France without incumbering himself with the task of liberator of the Netherlands.

VII

Nineteen days before the signing of the Treaty of Vervins Henry had granted the Huguenots their edict of toleration. Though it came at the earliest possible moment, it came none too soon. The Huguenots were driven to despair because all the members of the League, whether noble or bourgeois, who came to terms were almost as a matter of course allowed to forbid the exercise of the Protestant religion within their jurisdiction. Huguenots were still excluded from the offices of state. Duplessis-Mornay was the ablest, most tactful and most patriotic of their advocates. In June, 1596, when Henry was at Abbeville, Duplessis-Mornay wrote to him, saying : " I recognise the magnitude of the matters Your Majesty has in hand, and yet I venture to tell you, Sire, that the affair here is not one to be neglected." Henry replied : " I doubt not that there is a great deal that is wrong in the quarter where you are, but here there is so much that I do not know what remedy to apply although, believe me, I spare myself in no wise in the quest." Duplessis-Mornay had patience and faith in Henry. Others, like Odet La Noue, found the King's delays intolerable. " Our endurance will not last for ever," he said. " . . . I beg you, in God's name, give us some secure position." The Assembly which met at

Châtellerault in June, 1597, was the largest political gathering of Huguenots ever held, and it was also the most determined and outspoken. Indeed, a new civil war seemed imminent. In vain did Duplessis-Mornay argue that if the Huguenots gave their full support to Henry in the siege of Amiens he would at once grant an edict of toleration. Only a handful of adventurous spirits, such as Rohan, took his advice. The majority of the Assembly replied that experience had taught them that no such result would follow.

The Edict of Nantes, as finally published, was the result of two years' hard work on the part of de Thou, Schomberg, Calignon and de Vic. It followed closely the terms of the Treaty of Bergerac signed in 1577, after Alençon had finally deserted the Huguenot cause. The Huguenots were granted universal liberty of conscience, but they were only allowed to hold their services in the towns specified by that treaty, or in which they had been frequently celebrated in 1596 and 1597. In addition the "prêche" was to be allowed in one town in each bailiwick, and in the fiefs of Protestant nobles. In these privileged towns they were allowed to found schools and to print books. Three Protestant universities—La Rochelle, Nîmes and Montélimart—were recognised. The King promised to contribute 45,000 crowns a year, which was understood to be for the maintenance of Protestant ministers. At the same time the Huguenots agreed much against their will to pay tithes. In the Parlements of Paris, Rouen and Rennes, six out of the sixteen counsellors were to be Protestants, and special "Chambres de l'Edit" were to be established to try cases in

which Huguenots were parties. In the south three "Chambres mi-parties," composed equally of Catholics and Protestants, were to sit at Castres, Bordeaux and Gap, and exercise a similar jurisdiction. The Huguenots were to be allowed to hold synods, and to attend all colleges and schools; all offices were to be open to them, and they were to have complete civil equality. Finally they were given certain cities of security which they were to hold for eight years, and the King undertook to pay 100,000 crowns a year towards the costs of the garrisons which they were permitted to retain there.

Such was the Edict of Nantes which, for generations, has been represented as establishing complete toleration. It did no such thing. The only religion other than the Catholic which was to be tolerated was Calvinism, and that only within severe limits. The Edict did nothing to fuse Catholic and Huguenot and to unite them as Frenchmen and Christians. The concession of the privilege of worship to individual nobles and to congregations in special towns tended to accentuate the independence and isolation of the Huguenots. They were still on the defensive, and it was only natural that they should try to make their cautionary towns the nucleus of a semi-independent republic. They were given permission to continue to hold their political assemblies, and this, too, made it difficult for them to be drawn into the general life of the nation. The Edict was manifestly a "stop-gap," and as such was popular with neither side. Richelieu's policy of suppressing the political privileges of the Huguenots was the logical continuation of Henry's work, for the establishment of a semi-independent power within the

Kingdom was much against his will. After Richelieu had done his work, the Huguenots were left to fall defenceless before the tyranny and bigotry of Louis XIV.

At the same time it is wrong entirely to belittle Henry's religious settlement. Although he had established Catholicism as the official religion of France, he was able to make himself leader of Protestant Europe. He had turned Catholic, but at the same time he managed, by his Edict, to remain the protector of French Protestantism. More important still, he had chosen exactly the right moment to publish the edict. The war was over, and the immediate danger of civil strife had passed with it. Henry was to have difficulty enough in enforcing toleration, and it is quite plain that unless he had waited he would not have had the power ever to enforce it. It was not easy to induce the Parlement of Paris to register the Edict. Henry reasoned with them, trying to put the broad issues before them. "Listen to a father speaking to his children," he said, "God made me arbiter of peace and war. Having power to choose one or the other, tragic experience taught me to prefer peace because it is to your advantage. We have disposed of the Spaniards and the other enemies of the State. Would it have been possible, after making peace with the foreigner, for civil war to break out between my subjects? . . . War does nothing to settle differences of this kind. Only peace can put an end to them." It was not until August, 1609, that the Edict was registered by the Parlement of Rouen. Thus the Protestants' privileges had to be extorted. Unfortunately, they were used in a spirit similar

to that by which they had been acquired. In order to maintain the solidarity of the Kingdom, Henry had to rely more and more on the Catholic party. For the time being, however, Henry honestly desired to reward the Huguenots for the help they had given him. That he was able to give them so much is the best proof that he might have compelled them to accept infinitely less. The Edict of Nantes constituted a recognition of past services and an enlightened alternative to endless civil war. It was not based on idealism ; and its toleration came from the head, not the heart.

CHAPTER IV
HENRY, THE KING

I

At long last Henry was free to turn his attention to the pacification of France. He was forty-five years of age, and had always lived at high pressure. By the standards of the age he was already old, but despite occasional illnesses he was still strong and active. There was much for him to do, and he was anxious to do it. Towards the end of 1598 he was very ill at Monceaux. "I do not at all fear death," he said, "for I have faced it in the greatest dangers, but I avow that I am unwilling to leave this life until I have restored this Kingdom to that state of splendour which I have proposed to myself, and until I have testified to my people by governing them well and by easing them of their many cares that I love them as if they were my children." It will be seen how far he succeeded in his aim, but it is a more difficult matter to estimate his motives. That he had at times a high conception of his duty is undeniable. The selfishness of his character is equally undeniable, and his unbridled passions time and again obscured his better judgment. He was easily governed by women, and the trend of his policy at any particular time is often attributable to the influence of his mistress. One of his ministers

said that he would never dare to publish a history of the time "if only because it would suggest that some generous motive was the cause of a particular step which, in fact, it never was, as it was as often as not prompted by the love of a woman or the quarrel of a brothel."

Henry's love for Gabrielle was real and sincere, and she was by no means wholly unworthy of it. The lovers were at their happiest during their time at Rennes, in 1598. Henry, as usual, rose at dawn and worked hard all morning. The afternoon and evening he devoted to recreation, but he insisted on being told any news of importance at once at whatever hour of the day or night it arrived. The King was, of course, much perturbed that he did not have, and was unlikely to have, any legitimate children, and he often talked of asking the Pope to annul his marriage with Margaret, who was still at Usson. She was willing enough that Henry should take a new wife, so long as it was not Gabrielle, whom she despised as a low-born upstart. There is an amusing account in the *Memoirs of Sully*—how far it is apocryphal it is impossible to say—of a three hours' conversation on the subject between Henry and his minister. They were walking together in the garden at Rennes when Henry remarked that "the greatest misfortune of this life is . . . to have an ugly, bad and spiteful wife instead of finding the ease and contentment which I had always anticipated in marriage." He asked Sully what were the attributes to be looked for in anyone he might marry. Sully replied that undoubtedly she must be capable of having a son, she must be beautiful, and finally she must be *complaisante*. He suggested that

it might be a good idea to organise a competition for all the noble ladies of France between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five. It was, however, no secret that the King was bent on marrying Gabrielle if it could be arranged. Sully did not like the idea, and pointed out that he had already had two sons by her—César, who was born while both his parents were living in adultery, and Alexandre, born when only his mother's marriage had been annulled. There were bound to be difficult questions as to who was to be treated as the legitimate heir of the contemplated marriage. Neither of them imagined that death was to provide a swift solution of their problem.

Henry undoubtedly intended to marry Gabrielle in the course of 1599. Personally, she was not unpopular. The Huguenots, who once had thought of her as the scarlet woman, were grateful to her because she had resolutely refused to use her influence against the Edict of Nantes. The Catholics had found her invariably upright and merciful. "She had," as Aubigné puts it, "no enemies except the necessities of State," but these no conscientious monarch can ignore. Unfortunately, Henry was only intermittently conscientious. In February Margaret at last consented to an examination of the validity of her marriage, though she afterwards asserted that she had only done so because Henry had promised her that he would not marry Gabrielle. It is not unlikely he did so: promises counted for little against love.

In view of the near prospect of a new wife and of legitimate issue, Henry at last arranged for the marriage of his sister Catherine, whom hitherto he seems to have regarded as his lawful heir, at any

rate in Navarre. He would not let her marry Soissons, whom she had loved for years. That would be too dangerous. Instead, she was to marry Henry, Duke of Bar, the eldest son of Charles II of Lorraine, and thus to forge a new link in the chain of alliance between the once hostile families. Catherine was now forty, and was "more agreeable than fair, having one leg a little short. She was very clever, loved learning, and knew much for a woman, but was an obstinate Huguenot." There was some difficulty about the ceremony, as the bishops were unwilling to marry "an obstinate Huguenot" to a loyal son of the Church. Eventually, on the 31st January, 1599, the wedding took place in "the King's closet" at Paris, the ceremony being performed by the Archbishop of Rouen, the sub-normal illegitimate son of Henry's father, Antoine of Bourbon. The unhappy results of the marriage are tersely recounted by Bishop Périfixe. "This marriage being made for the good of the Catholic religion, it seemed that the Pope should have been content. Nevertheless, not willing to suffer an ill that good might come of it, he declared that the Duke of Bar had incurred excommunication for having, without the dispensation of the Church, contracted a marriage with a heretic; nor could the Duke, whatever entreaties he made, obtain absolution. It was necessary for God to lend His hand. This princess died three years after with sadness and melancholy at seeing herself live in a discontented manner with her husband, who daily pressed her to turn Catholic."

Meanwhile the Pope, as usual, was returning evasive replies to Henry's enquiries as to his attitude towards

the divorce. Henry's envoy, Sillery, one of his most confidential advisers, led the Pope to believe that his master was thinking of marrying a Florentine princess, Marie de' Medici. The Pope, however, was not wholly deceived. He was horrified at the idea of Henry marrying his mistress, but he was not blind to the possibility that Henry IV of France might emulate the example of Henry VIII of England. Owing to Gabrielle's insistent demands Henry was growing impatient, and as Easter approached it was evident that even Clement VIII could not continue to play for time.

Gabrielle was now expecting her fourth child, and it was urged on Henry that it was fitting that he should keep the festival away from all object of scandal. He reluctantly consented, and it was agreed that Gabrielle should go to Paris, while Henry remained at Fontainebleau. Both of them delighted in Fontainebleau and in its castle (dating from the time of Francis I) which Henry doubled in size and transformed into a palace. The many bosses containing an S transfixcd by an arrow (a punning allusion to the name Estrées: "*trait*" meaning "arrow") are a lasting reminder of the love of Henry of Bourbon and Gabrielle d'Estrées.

Henry accompanied her half-way to Paris, and then left her with many tears and embraces. She was wearing "the cut diamond ring with which he had wed France on the day of his coronation." Henry had given it to her a few weeks before. Even her wedding dress had been designed. Gabrielle completed the journey by river, because Henry feared that the fatigues of the road might be too much for her in her condition. On Tuesday, the 6th April,

1599, she dined with Sebastian Zamet, an Italian banker and a good friend of Henry's. She went home to her aunt, Madame de Sourdis, saying she did not feel well, and thinking that a lemon eaten at dinner had been the cause. The next day, Wednesday, she heard the office of *Ténèbres* at St. Anthony's, a church famed for its fine music; but she found the heat too much for her, and she returned with a severe headache. On the Thursday she was able to go to Mass, but immediately afterwards she went to bed. The next morning the doctors decided to deliver her of her baby. It was stillborn. Despite perpetual blood-letting and other appalling "remedies," her pain and convulsions grew worse. Her whole body was distorted with pain, and she grew black in the face. The like "had never been seen by any doctors, apothecaries or surgeons." Early on the morning of the 10th April she died.

The cause of her death remains a mystery. The obvious inference is that she was poisoned. The sudden fit of eclampsia certainly requires some explanation. The majority of her contemporaries and many historians, including Michelet, thought that Gabrielle had been poisoned by Zamet. This, however, is most unlikely, as he was a strong supporter of Henry's, and had nothing to gain by the death of his mistress. Other historians maintain that she was, in fact, poisoned at Zamet's house, but not by his orders. They suggest that one of his servants may have been induced to poison the food by Francesco Bonciani, the agent in Paris of Ferdinand of Tuscany, the uncle of Marie de' Medici. Ferdinand was certainly bent on marrying his niece to Henry, and Bonciani had written to him on the

20th June, 1598, that "it would be a difficult business . . . unless God stretched forth His holy hand." Nothing definite can be proved ; it may well be that Gabrielle ate something which disagreed with her at Zamet's, but that her convulsions, which only began three days afterwards, were due to the obstetric operation and the extraordinary potions administered by the unskilled and superstitious doctors who attended her.

Gabrielle's death had a profound effect on Henry. As soon as he heard she was seriously ill he started off for Paris. Bassompierre and Ornano met him at Villejuif, and told him it was all over. As a matter of fact, Gabrielle was not then dead, but so terribly was her face contorted that his friends decided not to let Henry see her. She thought he would come, but he did not. Prostrate with grief the King returned to Fontainebleau. He wrote in reply to his sister's message of sympathy : "Since God created me for this Kingdom and not for myself, my whole life and care will henceforth be directed towards its advancement and preservation. The flower of my love is dead, and will never blossom again." In this it is hardly necessary to say he was mistaken.

II

Henry had, on the whole, been fortunate in his choice of counsellors, and he found himself able to employ many who had actively opposed him in the past. He had an able diplomat in Bellièvre who, despite his advanced age, had proved his worth as

the principal negotiator of the treaty of Vervins. He also relied on his son-in-law, Sillery, one of the four secretaries of state ; Villeroy, another secretary who had done so much—not always quite honourably—to reconcile Mayenne to the King ; and Jeannin, a lawyer and another ex-leaguer who represented the conservative element in the government. Finally there was Maximilian de Béthune, Baron of Rosny and afterwards Duke of Sully, a professing Protestant who had been with the King from his earliest youth. He had no life apart from his work, and lived isolated and friendless, unswervingly devoted to his master. The second son of a small noble, he was intensely proud of his ancestry, and scrupulously punctilious in all matters of etiquette. He was honest, laborious and expeditious. His most notable characteristic, perhaps, was his avarice both in private and public life. Spending was a torment to him, whether the money was his own or the King's. His cautious efficiency was just what was wanted to counteract Henry's reckless prodigality. Though their characters were poles apart, they were always good friends. Rosny was already *Surintendant des finances* and Grand Master of the Artillery, an office which made him responsible for providing all the material of war.

Such were the men who received Henry's confidence. It will be noticed that none of them were nobles of the first class—a fact much resented by the old aristocracy. All his advisers urged Henry to re-marry. Most of them were intensely relieved by Gabrielle's death. They appreciated to the full the dangers of a disputed succession and even of a regency during a minority. Henry was nearly

forty-six, and, if he died without children, renewed civil war seemed inevitable. Henry himself appreciated the position. He told them that since Gabrielle's death it was a matter of indifference to him whom he married. He instructed his agents in Rome to press upon the Pope that his marriage with Margaret was a nullity in that there had been no free consent to it. Charles IX had forced it upon his reluctant sister. The second reason for annulment was their proximity of kindred (Henry and Margaret being related in the third degree), for which he alleged there had never been any valid dispensation. Margaret was now ready to support him, provided that her enormous debts were paid and that she was allowed to retain the title of Queen. In the autumn of 1599 the Pope appointed his nuncio, Cardinal Joyeuse, and the Archbishop of Arles to act as his commissioners in the matter. Having examined the parties and seen the proofs produced on each side, together with the request of the three estates of the Kingdom, the Commissioners on the 10th November declared the marriage null, and allowed the parties to marry whom they should think fit. Rosny, Villeroy and Sillery were now bent on hurrying Henry into marriage with Marie de' Medici, whom they knew to be both healthy and wealthy. They wished to have the business concluded before the flower of Henry's love bloomed again, for there were many ladies who suspected that they could achieve what Gabrielle had so narrowly missed.

Although his counsellors worked hard and hurried through the marriage articles, they were not quick enough. Before the end of 1599 Henry had fallen

violently in love with Henriette d'Entragues, who was then just eighteen years old. She came of a family already long associated with court scandals. Marie Touchet, who had been Charles IX's mistress and had borne him his only son, the Comte d'Auvergne, had later married the Sieur d'Entragues. Henriette was one of their numerous children. Her family were not averse to the *liaison*, but they were determined to exact their price. Accordingly, before Henry's desire was gratified, he had to order the reluctant Rosny to pay her family 100,000 crowns. This, however, was not thought a sufficient price by her adventurous relations, nor by Henriette herself. Although she was as yet comparatively inexperienced, Henry found her "haughty and difficult" from the start. She and her family exacted a promise from Henry in the following terms :

"We, Henry IV, King of France and Navarre, promise and swear before God and on our royal word to Messire François de Balzac, Lord of Entragues, in consideration of his giving us Henriette Catherine de Balzac, his daughter, that should she within six months from the first day of this month become pregnant and give birth to a son, then forthwith we shall take her for wife and legitimate spouse, and our marriage shall be publicly solemnised by our holy mother the Church. . . . Dated the 1st October, 1599."

His counsellors were dismayed to think that all their work at Rome should end in this. Henriette,

vain and capricious, with a host of scheming relations, was infinitely worse than Gabrielle. Sully relates that when at Fontainebleau Henry showed him the formal promise and asked his opinion on it, he instantly tore it up. The King said little, and contented himself with writing out a new copy. Henry perfectly appreciated his own folly, but he was in love again. He wrote a poem to Henriette beginning with this unfortunate line: "*Je vous offre sceptre et couronne.*" A month after he had won Henriette, the dissolution of his marriage with Margaret was formally announced. In January, 1600, Sillery was told to continue the arrangements for the proposed marriage between Henry and Marie de' Medici. She was the daughter of one Grand Duke of Tuscany and the niece of another. There were considerable political and financial advantages to be derived from the union. In the first place, it was of paramount importance for France to establish a foothold in Italy which at that time was dominated by the influence of the Spanish and Austrian Habsburgs. Secondly, an alliance with Tuscany might help to bring Savoy into line with France. Finally the Medicis were wealthy, and Henry already owed them a vast sum and was in sore need of more money. In April, 1600, the marriage contract was signed, much to the indignation of the Comte d'Auvergne and the Entragues faction. From this time date their incessant plots against Henry, and their treasonable intrigues with Spain and the discontented French nobles.

Before the marriage could be celebrated Henry was to undertake the only war he fought as King

of a united France. In the seventeenth century the land frontiers of France were far more difficult to defend than to-day. From the Rhône eastwards, northwards and westwards almost to the Somme France was, with hardly a break, surrounded by territories either belonging to the Habsburgs or to their allies. The French Kings' aim for years past had been to break the ring by securing the alliance of Savoy, a country which still extended as far as the Rhône and which, as we have seen, in times of civil crises, even disputed with France the right to Provence and Dauphiné. Situated as it was, Savoy held the gates both of France and of Imperial Italy. When she gave the word, either the troops of the Bourbons could pour into the plains of Lombardy, or those of the Habsburgs into the valley of the Rhône. The Dukes of Savoy were able politicians, and for long had succeeded in playing off their powerful neighbours the one against the other. Yet in the end necessity compelled them to choose the stronger ally. During the Italian expeditions of Charles VIII and Louis XII, Savoy had been on the side of victorious France, but in the time of Francis I she had veered round to the side of the Emperor, whom, to her cost, she failed to desert in time. In 1588 her duke had taken advantage of the civil wars in France to annex the Marquisate of Saluzzo, which lies between Nice and Turin. Although the Treaty of Vervins had referred the question of Saluzzo to the Pope he had, after prolonged negotiations, refused to make any award. Herein lay Henry's opportunity.

In December, 1599, Charles Emanuel of Savoy came to Fontainebleau to discuss the matter with

Henry. The King went with him to Paris, where the negotiations were conducted in the house of the Constable Henry de Montmorency. The Duke made use of his visit to gauge the feelings of the French malcontents. He found Biron amenable to his overtures. Biron had been sent, in 1598, to Brussels, where the civilities of the Spaniards had done much to weaken his never too firm loyalty to Henry. Furthermore, Charles Emanuel perceived the discontent of the Protestant nobles, especially Bouillon; and he evidently thought that Henry was none too secure at home. Though at the time piqued by the high-handed attitude of Spain, he believed he could continue to rely on Philip III. He did not yet know that if Philip II moved slowly Philip III never moved at all, and that Henry IV acted more quickly than anyone. In this frame of mind Charles Emanuel told Henry that he would not consider the surrender of Saluzzo. The utmost Henry could procure was a treaty, signed on the 27th February, 1600, whereby it was arranged that Saluzzo should be exchanged for other outlying territories. In addition Savoy was to have three months to decide whether to accept this offer or to restore Saluzzo. In other words, Charles Emanuel thought he had won enough time to make suitable arrangements with Spain. Outwardly, he and Henry remained friendly, but both were dissatisfied. The King had wanted reasonable terms, and the Duke had wanted a present he had no right to expect.

The 'three months expired, but the Duke did nothing. Henry moved to Lyons and finally, in August, 1600, declared war. "I will not be made a fool of," he said. "I know he is expecting help

from Spain ; I must stop that." Indeed, months too late, Fuentes had just been ordered to collect his forces at Milan. Biron's resentment had increased because Charles Emanuel had been careful to let him know that Henry had told him that he found his vanity intolerable. Nevertheless, he was anxious to prove his military prowess. Collecting some troops, he attacked Bresse and took the city of Bourg. He was enraged to find that, despite his success, Henry entrusted a large share of the operations to Lesdiguières. The French soon overran Savoy, capturing Chambéry, the ancient capital, without difficulty on the 21st August. The Pope, fearing that the war might become general, tried to mediate a peace.

Meanwhile preparations were being made for Henry's wedding. On the 5th October, 1600, Marie de Medici, aged twenty-six, fat and generally unattractive, was formally affianced at Florence to Bellegarde, who stood proxy for Henry. The ceremony was performed by Cardinal Aldobrandini, the Pope's nephew. Soon afterwards, escorted by a magnificent fleet, she set sail for Marseilles. When the messengers brought Henry the news, he asked them whence they came. "We come, sire, from marrying you," was the reply. For a quarter of an hour, so the story runs, Henry remained as if struck by a thunderbolt. Then he rubbed his hands and said : "Well, there is no remedy. If it is for the good of my Kingdom that I must marry, I must." Henriette, however, might well be expected to take a different view.

It is difficult to know whether she really expected Henry to fulfil his promise of marriage. She would

have agreed with Scaliger, the great classical scholar, who said of Henry that, despite his wit and shrewd knowledge of human character, he was incapable for a quarter of an hour of fixing his mind on the future. She knew that Henry's passion was such that he was ready to promise anything to win her. At the same time, it was unlikely that she would succeed where Gabrielle, a woman infinitely more acceptable, had failed. It seemed to Henry's ministers that God had intervened once more to save the King from his folly. Henriette had become pregnant within the stipulated time, but in the previous June she had been so alarmed by a terrific thunderstorm that she had given premature birth to a dead child. This, in the opinion of the majority, absolved Henry from his promise. At all events, the King was willing to take advantage of the excuse.

Marie de' Medici set sail from Italy escorted by a magnificent fleet of galleys, many of which were ornamented both within and without with precious stones. Men said that her arrival was like an invasion of Italians, for her train numbered nearly seven thousand. Six days later the King met her at Lyons. Marie had been rigidly brought up amid great luxury. She must indeed have been amazed at the first sight of her husband, who arrived late at night straight from the front, grey-bearded, jocular and, as so often, dirty. Outwardly he appeared pleased to see her. He told her that he could wait no longer for her; that she must forgive his lack of ceremony, and that he "expected her to lend him half her bed, as he had not been able to bring his own." Marie was shocked, but obedient.

It was lucky that Henry had so much zest in life, for he found his wife decidedly unattractive. "But you told me she was pretty . . ." he had said when he first saw her. Even Malherbe's pompous ode especially written for the occasion failed to move him. Henry, it is true, had seen a portrait of his bride, and had, with his usual enthusiasm, expressed himself enchanted. Rubens, in his florid way, has depicted the scene. Henry is seen overcome by the beauty of the picture which is presented to him by Hymen and Cupid, while Jupiter and Juno smile their approval from the Heavens, and an allegorical representation of France urges the King to follow "the dictates of his heart." Unfortunately, the portrait was ten years old, and Marie had since grown stouter; her eyes had become even more prominent, and her dress was still more untidy. However, he did his duty to both wife and mistress. The future Louis XIII was no love child, while within a month Henriette was again pregnant.

The marriage was formally confirmed on the 17th November, and soon afterwards the Queen began her slow journey northwards to Paris which she only reached in February, 1601. On her arrival she lodged a day or two with Sebastian Zamet. Henry, at any rate, did not regard him as the poisoner of Gabrielle d'Estrées. Meanwhile Henry hastened to make peace with Savoy. His great fear was that the rupture with Savoy would be made the occasion of another European war. France was not yet ready for that, and Henry took care to inform all the European powers of what he called his "just reasons." The Pope, above all, was anxious to put an end to the war, and he sent his nephew, Cardinal

Aldobrandini, to act as mediator. The great difficulty was to get the evasive Duke to agree to anything definite. Eventually a treaty of peace was signed at Lyons on the 17th January, 1602. Saluzzo was formally ceded to Savoy, and in exchange France acquired the territories of Bresse, Bugey and Val-romey, which lie south of Franche Comté between Geneva and the Saone. This arrangement was mutually advantageous, as Saluzzo was a purely Italian country, small in extent and isolated from France. On the other hand, the newly acquired territory afforded a much needed protection for the country round Lyons. It was the first step towards giving France her "natural frontiers," for which Richelieu, Mazarin and Louis XIV were to fight so many wars. The terms of the Treaty were generous, but Henry had good reason for moderation. At the price of the surrender of a distant possession, the retention of which would inevitably be a cause of friction, he had prepared the way for a renewal of the valuable alliance between Savoy and France. Charles Emanuel began gradually to emancipate himself from Habsburg influence. The Spanish general, Fuentes, was naturally disgruntled, for the excessive delays of Madrid had deprived him of a golden opportunity of keeping France weak.

The King arrived at Paris long before his wife, and soon after her arrival they made a pleasant excursion to see his new buildings at St. Germain-en-Laye. He was enjoying life again. He hunted, danced and drank. Though always polite to his queen he saw her as little as possible, and was constantly in the company of Henriette, whom he created Marquise de Verneuil, and who at this

time was far kinder and less capricious than ever again. Henry's only grievance was that his wife and his mistress could not see eye to eye. Marie despised Henriette, and Henriette laughed at Marie, calling her "the fat banker."

In the course of the summer an incident occurred which, but for the Pope's tactful intervention, might well have led to renewed war with Spain. The French ambassador in Spain was named Rochepot. One day his nephew and another member of the ambassador's train were bathing, when some young Spaniards came upon them and began to jeer at their antics. The Frenchmen, thoroughly incensed, emerged from the water, and a violent quarrel ensued with the result that two of the Spaniards were killed. The assailants made good their escape and took refuge in Rochepot's house, which was at once besieged by a furious mob. In the hope of restoring order, the Spanish authorities sent an armed force to arrest them, and the two men were committed to prison. The disregard of diplomatic immunity in breaking into an ambassador's private house, together with the inadequate nature of the apology offered, was a very serious matter. Henry at once withdrew his ambassador, and forbade all commerce with the King of Spain's dominions. Fearing that the Spaniards might take this opportunity to advance from the Netherlands into Picardy, Henry immediately moved northwards to Calais. Fortunately at this juncture the Pope intervened, and induced Philip to surrender the prisoners. Henry declared himself satisfied. Once more he had shown that France was not the second-class power she had been in the days of his predecessor.

While Henry was at Calais Queen Elizabeth sent Lord Edmonds to assure him of her good intentions. It is round this visit that Sully wove his account of Elizabeth's acceptance of the Grand Design, but his story is without foundation. In reply to this courtesy, Henry resolved to send a mission to England. The purpose of this mission being merely to assure Elizabeth of Henry's lively esteem for her, he therefore felt safe in sending Biron, hoping by a display of confidence to revive his old comrade's dying embers of loyalty. Biron was accompanied by Henriette's half-brother, Auvergne, whose good faith was also rightly suspected by Henry.

It is not altogether certain that Elizabeth appreciated the position, but she certainly took a delight in showing Biron a large number of heads fixed on the walls of the Tower of London, pointing out that it was in this way that rebels were punished in England, and asking him how they were treated in France. She also told him why she had had the Earl of Essex executed, who had been so dear to her. Biron, however, failed to profit by the hint.

Henry was fully occupied all the summer tackling financial and administrative abuses. He attempted also to find some means of countering the discontent of the nobles, most of whom, at the end of the wars, found themselves penniless and unoccupied. Henry knew that Spain was always ready to encourage them in treason, and he watched them narrowly. He was determined to follow Elizabeth's example. France was in a precarious condition : the monarchy itself was none too safe. Some years before Villeroy observed that the wounds inflicted by the civil

wars were far from wholly healed. "A little accident," he had written, "can make the wound as dangerous as before. Above all, we must beg His Majesty to take more care of himself than he does, for on his preservation depends the safety of the Kingdom." It is true that every year Henry lived. France became more secure, but he was nearly forty-eight, and as yet had no legitimate children. It is easy to imagine the joy with which the news of the birth of a Dauphin was received. On the 27th September, 1601, the Queen gave birth to a son at Fontainebleau. Both mother and child belied the forebodings of the doctors, and survived. Henry told Sully to fire all the guns of the Arsenal in salute. In December the child was taken through the beflagged streets of Paris to St. Germain, where the air was considered more healthy.

Meanwhile Biron, after a short visit to Switzerland as Henry's envoy, had been in negotiation with Auvergne and the Protestant Bouillon. They signed a formal alliance that they would stand together against all men "without exception." Their avowed aim was to divide France into a number of semi-independent principalities, each under the protection of Spain. Thus the Duke of Savoy was to be offered the Lyonnais, and Biron himself was to have Burgundy and possibly Franche Comté, if it could be won. They hoped to derive support from the popular discontent caused by Henry's heavy taxation, and especially by the oppressive tax on sales. Further, they counted on an alliance between the "*mécontents des deux religions*"—Protestants who considered themselves deserted, and Catholics who were angry at the King's misuse of Church property.

Bouillon fancied himself as the protector of Protestants both in France and Germany, but his overtures at this time were curtly rebuffed by Aubigné on behalf of the Huguenots. Despite this, the combination was formidable, and might easily have led to civil war.

One of the conspirators was a man named Laffin who, a year or so before, had been Biron's intermediary with Savoy. His previous experience had shown him the instability of Biron's character. He knew of Biron's immense faith in astrology and black magic, and that, though on occasion he could be brave, he was always selfish and foolish. He also knew that the promises of Savoy were not to be trusted, and that the increasing poverty and incessant delays of Philip III made him an undesirable protector. Far more was to be gained, he thought, from earning Henry IV's gratitude. Accordingly he consistently informed the King of the conspirators' plans through the agency of his nephew, the Vidame of Chartres. His greatest success was to send Henry a letter in Biron's hand-writing setting out all the objects of the plot. One evening, when Biron was in bed, he told him that he was convinced that such a document, written as it was in his own well-known hand, was too dangerous to be kept, and that a copy should be made and the original destroyed. Biron agreed, and Laffin sat down to make a copy. When he had finished, he threw the original into the fireplace, taking care that it fell between the fire-back and the wall, whence it was duly retrieved and sent to Henry.

Laffin's next step was to visit Fuentes in Italy, but unfortunately for him the Spaniard was

suspicious, and told him nothing. Accordingly, early in 1602 he sought out the King who, alarmed at the ramifications of the plot, was very willing to see him. As a result, Henry sent for Biron, who, as we have seen, occupied a great position as Governor of Burgundy and Marshal of France. He was a man whom even Kings had to respect, for, in a generation which remembered Guise's alliance with Philip II, to offend a noble supported by a foreign power was to invite civil war. Biron at first declined absolutely to come. Henry thereupon sent President Jeannin to persuade him, telling him that he had nothing to fear provided he was prepared to prove his good intentions. Biron did not in the least suspect Laffin, although he knew he had been at court. Eventually he decided to come. Soon after she arrived at Fontainebleau Henry wrote to Rosny: "My friend, our man has come. He is very reticent and careful. Come as quickly as you can, so that we can discuss what we have to do. Good-bye. I love you well."

Henry had two interviews with Biron, the second while walking in the gardens. Biron insolently refused to make any admissions, and told the King that he had come to seek justice, but that if he did not get it he would take the law into his own hands. Henry merely replied: "You did well to come, for otherwise I was going to fetch you." Soissons also pleaded with Biron, and clearly warned him of his danger. On the 14th June, Henry determined to take the almost unprecedented step of arresting one of the greatest nobles in France. The Tudors in England would have thought little of such a step, but for Henry it required much courage.

Besides, Biron was an old friend and, as he pointed out at his trial, he had received twenty-two wounds in Henry's service. The King reasoned with him once more, but Biron refused to tell him anything. "Well, then," said Henry, "we must learn the truth in another place. Farewell, *Baron de Biron*." By thus degrading him of all the honours he had bestowed on him, Henry made it plain that the time for pardon had gone by. The same day, as Biron was leaving the Queen's apartments, he was arrested by Vitry, captain of the King's guard. On the following day he was taken by water to the Bastille. Meanwhile, Auvergne was also arrested. Henriette was powerless to save him.

Biron was first examined by four commissioners, and was then tried by the Parlement. Thanks largely to Laffin, the proofs of his guilt were overwhelming. It was proved that he had plotted to kill the King. The verdict of the hundred and fifty counsellors was unanimous. He was condemned to be executed in the notorious Place de la Grève, and all his property was declared forfeited to the King.

At the last moment Henry decided that he could not afford to risk the possibility of a general riot occurring at the execution, for Biron was still immensely popular with the soldiers. Accordingly, pretending to confer some mitigation of the severity of the sentence, he changed the place of execution to the interior of the Bastille. To the last, Biron could not believe his fate. He thought that Laffin was a magician, and that his arrest had been the work of the devil. Three times he knelt down at the block, and three times he leapt up expecting the news of a reprieve. Irresolute to the last,

it is said that the executioner was obliged to strike him unawares.

Biron's confederates were tried. Some were pardoned; others were executed or imprisoned. Auvergne was kept in prison until October, when Henriette secured his release. She had refused to give Henry a moment's peace until he gave the order. Henry's weakness in this respect somewhat lessened the effect of the execution, the results of which, however, were immediate and far reaching.

Bouillon was pressed to come to court, but he declined the invitation. He turned away Henry's wrath by a soft answer in which he offered, as a Huguenot, to stand his trial before the *Chambre mi-partie* at Castres. This Henry curtly refused, and Bouillon took the opportunity of pointing out to the already apprehensive Huguenots that their safety was entirely dependent on the King's good will, since it seemed that the Edict of Nantes meant nothing to him. Soon afterwards he retired to Germany, where he represented Henry as the fanatical persecutor of the reformed religion, and himself as the leader and protector of French Protestantism. Biron's execution was the first step towards the abasement of the nobles. They remained still dissatisfied, and many continued to dream of independence. The danger was scotched: it had yet to be killed.

III

All this time Henry's domestic life was becoming more and more intolerable. With incredible tact-

lessness he had arranged that the Queen and Henriette should have neighbouring apartments in the Louvre. Such an arrangement might have its advantages for Henry, who was wont to pass from one to another during the night, but its disadvantages were yet more obvious. Marie naturally resented the affront, and in revenge vented her spleen on Henry. She constantly abused and upbraided him, and the royal arguments could be heard throughout the palace. Madame de Verneuil continually insulted the Queen. "If justice were done," she declared, "I would occupy the place of that fat banker." Henry was powerless. He was completely enslaved by his mistress, who treated him with the greatest disrespect.

The Queen's most marked characteristic was her obstinacy, and it was not surprising that she was adamant in her hostility to the Marquise. She had done her duty ; already she had given Henry two children—Louis, the Dauphin, and Elizabeth, who was later to be Queen of Spain. She could not bring herself to countenance Henry's amours. The King put the position in a nut-shell when he told Sully that "Madame de Verneuil is good company when she likes. She tells good stories, and has always something to make me laugh, which I never get at home, finding neither companionship, joy nor consolation in my wife. . . . She is so disdainful and cold when I come in to embrace her, and laugh with her, that I am constrained to leave her and find my recreation elsewhere." There was much of the child in Henry, and he was incapable of understanding how intolerable the situation was for all concerned. He could not live without love.

Unfortunately, Marie hated him and Henriette played with him.

The strain was too much for him, and in May, 1603, he fell seriously ill at Fontainebleau. On the 16th his doctors gave their opinion: "*Abstineat a quavis muliere etiam regina.*" This was a bitter blow for Henry, who thought he must be at the point of death. He wrote to Sully to come to him: "My friend, I feel so bad that it seems that God wants to have done with me. Now being obliged . . . to think of the orders which will be necessary to ensure the succession of my children, and to see that they reign in happiness to the advantage of my wife and the condition of my good servants and my poor people whom I love as my own dear children, I want to talk to you about everything before making my decisions. Therefore come to me as speedily as you can without saying anything to anybody or giving any cause for alarm. . . ." Sully duly came, but before long Henry had recovered, and was as alert and active as ever. The doctor's prescription had not only restored his bodily strength, but had also given him some peace of mind.

Henry's domestic difficulties were naturally not his only anxiety. The Kingdom was far from completely pacified. A generation of civil war is not soon forgotten, and France had grown by long habit to rely on force rather than reason. A spark of rebellion might ignite the whole country. It behoved Henry to be continually vigilant, and for some time before his illness he had been in Lorraine where a renewal of civil war seemed imminent. Henry III had made the Duke of Epemon Governor of Metz, and the Duke had appointed an independent

and unreliable captain, named Sobole, to be his lieutenant governor. For several years there had been a deadly feud between the burgesses of Metz and Sobole, who suspected Epernon of siding with them, so much so that he actually refused to allow the Duke to enter the citadel. Open war between the citizens and the garrison ensued, and so alarming was the situation that the King himself went to the city. He feared that the Duke of Bouillon might make use of the incident to persuade some of the German princes, particularly the Elector Palatine, to intervene. Fortunately for Henry the citizens welcomed him, and Sobole delivered the citadel into his hands. Henry consolidated his position by establishing a royal garrison in the city. The incident is not one of great importance, but it illustrates Henry's constant fear of foreign intervention, and also how essential it was for France to have a strong King ready to act at once. The whole safety of the Kingdom depended on Henry alone.

Henry spent the Easter of 1603 at Metz. The Jesuit representatives took the opportunity of petitioning for leave to return to France. The matter was not easy, and Henry postponed giving his decision until he returned to Paris. He allowed Ignatius Armand and Cotton to follow him there to plead the cause of the Jesuits. The considerations that weighed with Henry will be discussed later. It was no hasty decision which he pronounced in the following September. The Jesuits were then allowed to return to France, provided that all the members of the Society working in France were Frenchmen. The pyramid which had been erected opposite the

Louvre to commemorate their expulsion was destroyed. Father Cotton became the King's confessor. The Protestants were furious, but Henry told them that he had had to choose between the Jesuits and the knife, and that he preferred the former.

Henry was spared the certain criticism of his old ally, Elizabeth, who had died on the 4th April of the same year. It was of vital importance to maintain friendly relations with England. Elizabeth had been fickle and unreliable, but Henry knew for certain that she would never side with his enemies. Of James I he knew little, but it was certain he was no determined enemy of Spain. At the same time he was a staunch Protestant, and it was not impossible that Bouillon or some other discontented Huguenot noble might persuade him to constitute himself the protector of French Protestantism, and to meddle with the internal politics of France. In order, therefore, to establish cordial relations, Henry sent Rosny to England during June and July, 1603. His mission was, on the whole, successful. The ancient treaties between the two countries were renewed. Unfortunately for France, these included the hard bargain made by Elizabeth with Charles IX, concerning their commercial relations. This bargain was infinitely more favourable to English than to French merchants, and English vessels continued to harry French commerce with complete impunity. Henry had still to establish himself on an equality with England, but he did have the satisfaction of knowing that Rosny's mission had forestalled the Spaniards, who had to be content with terms that Philip II would have disdained. France was now in close alliance with the English, the Swiss and the

Venetians. She could pose as the protector of some of the Italian states. Savoy was unlikely again to attempt hostilities. The Dutch were satisfied in that Henry IV and James I had agreed to furnish them underhand support. Henry, therefore, was in a position to press on with his work of reconstruction at home.

In the course of the year 1604 much progress was made with Henry's programme of financial and industrial reform. Yet for Henry the year marked the culmination of the feud between his wife and his mistress. The story is full of psychological interest. Henry genuinely wanted to love and be loved by two women at the same time. Though he was disappointed in Marie's appearance, he did not hate her, and he was pathetically anxious that she should love him. Whenever he was with her he was full of kindly attentions towards her. When the Dauphin was born he could not have been more tender. "My dear," he said, "I know that you have had a terrible time. But God has been very good to us . . . we have a fine son." When the Princess Elizabeth was born Marie was much upset that she had not had another son. Henry consoled her, "reminding her that if her mother had never had any daughters, he would never have had her as queen of France." When he was away from her he used to write charming little letters to her. One begins: "I shall not be able to sleep until I have written to you. . . ." He was not joking, either, for in many ways he was the complete family man. He took an intense delight in his children, whether legitimate or illegitimate. He used regularly to watch little Louis

eating his supper. One day, it is reported, the Dauphin refused to finish his broth, whereupon Henry sat down and finished it off, exclaiming : " If anyone wants to know what the King of France is doing now, he is drinking his broth." He loved to take his children to feed the swans and the carp in the gardens of Fontainebleau.

This pleasant picture of royal domesticity is only half of the truth. Henry could not do without the vivacity and intriguing caprice of Henriette. In her he found no such comfort as he had in Gabrielle, but she held the grey-bearded King in complete slavery. He would do anything for her. She talked to him as an equal, and Henry, being a simple soul, enjoyed the change from courtly flattery. In his simplicity he could not understand why Henriette must continually be throwing insults at the Queen. Why could she not realise that it was essential for him to have legitimate children? As for Marie, why could she not accept the position? He gave her everything. He was always ready to be affectionate. Why did she not understand that he had always had a mistress, and that it was unreasonable to expect him to give up the gay and mischievous Henriette? Henry suspected that it was the influence of her Italian attendants which made his wife so uncompromising.

He was not altogether wrong in his surmise. Marie had brought with her from Italy a Florentine, Leonora Galigai. She was a woman of humble extraction, the daughter of the Queen's wet-nurse. She was extremely ugly, being undersized and sallow ; but she was remarkably clever, and had gained ascendancy over her mistress. She consolidated

her position by marrying another Italian adventurer named Concini, whose family was well known in Florence, and whose ambition and capacity for intrigue were equal to her own. In order to maintain their influence, these two did all they could to incense Marie's resentment against Henry. Their task was not difficult, and they succeeded in making harmony impossible for all time. Marie's attitude had the natural effect of driving Henry more and more into the arms of Madame de Verneuil, who in turn grew more and more insolent to the Queen and her Italian attendants. Although to pique Henry she flirted with other lovers, she still hoped to be queen.

By the summer of 1604 Henriette, it seemed, had overstepped the limit of the King's endurance. Henry was at last growing tired of her vagaries, and it was rumoured that he was beginning to pay marked attentions to her younger sister. Her father and her half-brother, the Comte d'Auvergne, were seriously alarmed. Both of them were typical of the generation produced by the civil wars. Both had been living comfortably on the sums screwed out of Henry by reason of his infatuation for Henriette, reinforced by the famous promise of marriage, which they still retained. Unfortunately, Sully's financial niggardliness was always a serious obstacle. He would not allow the King to give full rein to his natural generosity. Accordingly they conceived a plot, the details of which are still obscure, but which to-day seems incredible in its audacity. Shortly, the idea was to get Henriette to lure the King to some place where he might be easily despatched. They would then get possession of the

Queen and the Dauphin, and finally, with Spanish aid, would put Henriette's son on the throne. Whether the scheme was ever definitely worked out it is impossible to say, chiefly because the conspirators lost their heads when they perceived that Madame de Verneuil was losing her influence with the King.

It is certain that they made a formal treaty with Spain. Henry had reason to believe such a treaty existed in June, 1604. Rosny and Villeroy urged him to act at once. In July, Auvergne's principal agent—one Antoine Chevillard—was arrested, but the treaty was not found in his possession. It is generally supposed that he ate the document just before his arrest. The incident was more than enough to put Auvergne on his guard. He at once fled the Court. Henry sent the Treasurer Murat to lure him back, but Auvergne pertinently told him that he remembered very well what had happened to Biron in similar circumstances. He therefore remained at Clermont where, in the words of Bishop Péréfixe, "he kept himself on his guard, with all precautions imaginable. Nevertheless," he continues, "cunning as he was, the King by a clumsy artifice entrapped him." Being Colonel of the French cavalry, Auvergne was desired to attend a muster of a company of the Duke of Vendôme. He went well mounted, keeping himself at a great distance that he might not be surprised. Nevertheless, D'Eurre, lieutenant of that company, and Nerestan, approaching him to salute him, mounted on ponies so as to remove his suspicion, but with three soldiers disguised as attendants, cast him from his horse and made him prisoner. They led him to the

Bastille, where he was seized with a great fear when he found himself lodged in the same chamber where the Marshal de Biron, his great friend, had been. His fear may well have increased when the King's officers found letters implicating the Duke of Bouillon.

No sooner had Auvergne been taken than Entragues was taken by surprise, arrested, and lodged in the Conciergerie. He was induced to surrender Henry's marriage promise to four of the King's counsellors—Soissons, Sillery, Jeannin and Villeroy. He hoped thereby to win a pardon for himself. Madame de Verneuil was also placed in confinement. The Queen was overjoyed, but her delight was somewhat lessened when she discovered that Henry had fallen a victim to the charms of an unattractive blonde named Jacqueline de Beuil, whom he proceeded to make his mistress with the title of Comtesse de Moret. In due course, Henry handed the prisoners over to the Parlement for trial. On the 1st February, 1605, the Court declared Auvergne, Entragues and an Englishman named Morgan, who had been the conspirators' intermediary with the Spanish ambassador, guilty of high treason, and condemned them to death. The Court further ordered Henriette to be taken under strong guard to a convent near Tours, where it was suggested she should be kept for life. During the trial she had shown no fear, and had spoken with the greatest confidence. She relied on the King's weakness. On one occasion she remarked: "He would not wish it to be said that he had had his second wife executed."

Her calculation was right, for she knew the King better than he knew himself. Within seven months she was back with him. He had found Jacqueline's

charms cloying : he could not do without Henriette. No further proof of her direct complicity was brought against her, and accordingly he caused her to be declared innocent of the crime of which she had been accused. Meanwhile, he had felt himself secure enough to be lenient with the principal conspirators. He commuted the penalty of death on Auvergne and Entragues into one of perpetual imprisonment, and that on Morgan to perpetual banishment. Auvergne, in fact, remained in prison for twelve years.

Henry by his swift action had dealt with the second conspiracy of his nobles. It seemed that only Bouillon remained. The plot has been noticed in some detail, not because it came near to success, but because it illustrates the essential weakness of France. There were no stable and respected institutions as in England. There was no adequate police force. The civil wars had destroyed all sense of order and loyalty among the nobility. Only the King remained—the one hope of those who longed for peace, order and good government. Everything depended on his personality. Henry IV would have been nearer the truth than Louis XIV if he had said : “ *L’état c’est moi,*” for without him the State would have disappeared. It was in fact reduced almost to nothing during the regency which followed Henry’s death.

IV

While Henriette was still shut up in the abbey of Beaumont-lès-Tours, some stir was caused in Paris by the return of the former Queen Margaret of Valois.

She reminded men of days long past when Catherine de' Medici had ruled in the Louvre. She had grown fat and unprepossessing. She was still excessively "made up" and still delighted in the company of young men. Henry enjoyed being with her more than he had ever done before. Both were delighted when the Parlement confirmed her title to the county of Auvergne, which she claimed through her mother, and which the Comte d'Auvergne claimed as a gift from Henry III. In view of the fact that he was languishing in the Bastille the decision was hardly surprising. Margaret was ready to pay her respectful homage to the new queen. Her houses in Paris and her estate at Issy became centres for learned discussions. She was, in addition, passionately fond of music. She was generous to a fault and was, as a result, perpetually in debt. She took no part in politics and died forgotten but contented in 1615.

Soon after her arrival in Paris, Margaret had informed Rosny that she had reason to believe that fresh plots were afoot on Languedoc. She could give no very precise details, but it was quite obvious that Bouillon was still dabbling in treason. The Huguenot assemblies of 1603 and 1605 had shown that the Protestants were far from contented. Bouillon was undoubtedly the leading Protestant noble. His marriage with the heiress of Sedan, a territory not included in the Kingdom of France, had given him a measure of independence which was itself dangerous. His aim was to be acknowledged the protector of the Huguenots, and in that capacity to become master of the provinces south of the Loire. It was believed that he had been involved in Biron's conspiracy, and that the Spaniards were supplying him with money.

His organisation spread through Guyenne. Henry appreciated that the Protestants would not cease from troubling him until Bouillon had been dealt with. Accordingly he resolved to act.

He marched south from Fontainebleau to Limoges, the centre of the discontent. The majority of Protestants were loyalist at heart and confessed to Henry all they knew. Five traitors were executed at Limoges and three or four more at Périgord. The King then returned to Paris. He had failed to discover any direct evidence against Bouillon, and he was reluctant to adopt severe measures against him for fear of incensing the great body of Huguenots, who regarded Bouillon not as a traitor but as a hero. The Duke, it is true, was not a mere adventurer such as Auvergne. His restiveness was largely occasioned by his inability to pay his debts. He was a good soldier and had no personal animosity against Henry. The truth was that there was no room for nobles of independent mind in the new system of centralisation.

Henry adopted the usual procedure in the case of disaffected nobles. He sent commissioners to the Duke to beg him to come to court and to throw himself on the royal clemency. Bouillon was more than willing to come to terms, but he felt not without justification that he could not hope for security at court, particularly as Rosny was his avowed enemy and either distrusted or was jealous of his influence with the Huguenots. After much abortive negotiation, Henry resolved to march against Bouillon and, if possible, to take Sedan.

Rosny was most active in the preparation of this expedition, and in recognition of his services Henry made him Duke and Peer on the 12th February,

1606. The Duke of Sully, as he was to be known henceforth, was delighted with his new honours, and to celebrate the occasion gave a gargantuan dinner typical of the seventeenth century in its magnificence and prodigality. In March the King moved eastwards. He was in high good humour to be in the field again after five years of arduous peace. On the 30th La Varenne wrote to Sully : " You never saw the King better or more popular among the soldiers ; you can see that he is quite in his element."

Sully had urged the King at all costs to defeat Bouillon and take Sedan, and for that purpose he had left the King to collect all the artillery he could, for many considered that Bouillon's citadel was impregnable. Villeroy, on the contrary, urged moderation. He pointed out the siege of Sedan was bound to be lengthy and it would serve as a good opportunity for the Spaniards once more to assault the frontiers of Picardy, for Savoy to enter Provence and for the Huguenots and the German Protestants to rally to Bouillon's assistance.

In fact, none of these things happened. The King decided to reopen negotiations with Bouillon. That his wife remained in Sedan and that the Duke needed no persuasion to come to Henry suggests that he knew that terms could be arranged. At all events a treaty was speedily signed whereby it was agreed that Sedan should have a royal governor and a royal garrison and that the inhabitants should take an oath of allegiance to Henry. These were the public conditions, but by secret articles the King agreed to retire immediately and to withdraw his troops after a decent interval. These terms were faithfully observed. Before the end of April Henry returned

to Paris. He was soon followed by Bouillon himself, who was treated with utmost civility. The Duke had made his peace with the King, but he had not forgiven Sully, and when he was invited to the baptism of the four-year-old Dauphin at Fontainebleau in September, 1606, he refused to go because he would have had to have given precedence to his rival at the ceremony. Henry did not take the refusal amiss. He understood the position and he appreciated Bouillon's new attitude of independent but genuine loyalty to himself. In the first days of 1607 he withdrew his garrison from Sedan and reinstated Bouillon as governor.

The story of Bouillon's so-called revolt casts an interesting light on Henry's character. It shows that his oft-repeated claims of magnanimity were no empty words. He preferred to forgive and he was incapable of bearing a grudge against anyone however monstrous his conduct. Indeed the cause of many of his difficulties with his wife was that he could not conceive of anyone adopting a different attitude from his own. Yet though he was always ready to forgive he was equally ready to take extreme measures if they were necessary. This combination of firmness and magnanimity lies at the root of his popularity. He was a strong king and would brook no opposition, but he was always eager to be the friend of all men. No one had given Henry more cause for anxiety than the Duke of Mayenne. Yet in their later years they became most friendly. The happiness of their relations and Henry's rather crude wit is illustrated by a story told by a Welshman named James Howell, writing from Paris in 1620. He recounts a number of Henry's jokes and continues: "Another time,

the old Duke of Main, who was used to play the Droll with him, coming softly into his Bedchamber, and thrusting in his bald Head, and long Neck, in a Posture to make the King merry, it happened the King was coming from doing his Ease ; and spying him, he took the round cover of the Close-stool, and clap'd it on his bald Sconce, saying, Ah Cousin, you thought once to have taken the Crown from off my Head, and wear it on your own ; but this of my tail shall now serve your Turn."

Bouillon's revolt was the last serious threat to the security of the throne, but to the end of his life Henry was in constant danger both from the assassin's knife and from the intrigues of many obscure plotters who were willing to sell their country to Spain. On the 19th December, 1605, Henry was returning from hunting. He was crossing the Pont-Neuf at Paris, for the building of which he was largely responsible and which was not yet quite completed, when he was attacked by a man named Jean de l'Isle. The would-be murderer was at once arrested and examined by President Jeannin, who found that he was mad. Henry refused to take the matter seriously and gave orders that he should not be punished. However, it was not long before the news came that he had conveniently died in prison at Fort l'Evêque.

More disquieting perhaps was the discovery that one L'Oste for some considerable time had been revealing all the secrets of the King's council to Spain in return for a pension of twelve hundred crowns. L'Oste was Villeroy's confidential secretary and was also his godson. L'Oste himself was drowned in the Marne while attempting to make good his escape. He was only a small rogue, but it was not unnatural

that Villeroy's loyalty became at once suspect. His antecedents were not altogether blameless. At one time he had been a staunch leaguer. He had virtually betrayed the League during the siege of Paris, and he had afterwards driven a hard bargain with Henry before making his submission. His enemies openly called him a traitor, and he would undoubtedly have had considerable difficulty in extricating himself from the business, whether innocent or not, had Henry not retained implicit confidence in him. The King trusted him and visited him in the hour of affliction and thereby justified him to the full.

There were other plots. Mérargues was executed for plotting to deliver Marseilles to Spain, and the brothers Luquisse were hanged for attempting to hand Narbonne to the enemy ; but these acts were not in themselves dangerous. Henry was safe for the moment, but how unsubstantial was the edifice of royal supremacy is easily realised by the terror with which such obscure plots were regarded. Spain was behind them all and many clamoured for open war. Henry, however, bided his time. Both he and Franc still needed a breathing space.

V

The year 1607 was for the most part devoted to the work of peaceful consolidation at home. Unfortunately, Henry's private life continued to be marred by the perpetual squabbles between the Queen and Madame de Verneuil. The King still liked to go about with a bevy of ladies. He knew his weakness and was ready to be reproved by those who guided him in religion. On one occasion, shortly before Henriette's

disgrace, he went to church with her and a number of court ladies. Their perpetual conversation annoyed the preacher and he was particularly exasperated by Madame de Verneuil "making signs to the King to make him laugh." At last he could bear it no longer. "Sire," he expostulated, "will you never come to hear the word of God without a harem? Will you never cease making so great a scandal in this holy place?" Henry listened quietly. After the service he thanked him for the reproof but asked him not to do it quite so publicly in the future.

As time went on Henry grew to rely more and more on Sully. He had complete control of the royal purse. On the 11th December, 1606, Henry wrote to him a typical letter: "Since I have gambled all my money away I am sending you this word by Loménie's nephew to tell you to send me 2,000 pistoles by Morant. I must have them immediately. Good night, my friend." Sully revelled in his arduous tasks. According to him, Henry admitted he could not do without him. His memoirs relate that on the 8th April, 1607, Henry wrote to him: "You know by the many things which have happened concerning my mistresses (for love has always had the most powerful hold over me) and by the fact that I have so often upheld your opinions against their whims, even going so far as to tell them they were behaving spitefully, that I would rather lose ten mistresses like them than one servant like you."

The Court as a whole was not remarkable for its luxury. Henry was no lover of ceremony. Occasionally, however, there were elaborate displays of magnificence. The baptism of the royal children in September, 1606, was one of such occasions. The

Dauphin, afterwards Louis XIII, and his two sisters, Elizabeth, afterwards Queen of Spain, and Christine, who was to marry the Duke of Savoy, were christened in the baptistry specially erected for the purpose in the gateway of the Cour Ovale at Fontainebleau. The whole of the courtyard was covered over with an awning. Pope Paul V, represented by his legate, Cardinal Joyeuse, was one of the godfathers. The ceremony began at four and ended at six. It was followed by illuminations and a banquet which lasted into the next day. Never was such magnificence seen before. The dress of Marshal de Bassompierre, which cost six hundred crowns, was of violet cloth of gold, and, in the embroidery, there were pearls weighing fifty pounds. It is said that the Duke of Epemon's sword was set with 1,800 diamonds. Contemporary accounts emphasise the fact that the baptism was accompanied by strange portents in the sky. Indeed, it would have seemed strange to men of that age if such a glorious occasion had not been characterised by supernatural activity. The heavens were lit up by a bright light passing from east to west; armies of men, some in fiery cars, some on foot, some on horseback, fought battles in mid-air. Astrologers interpreted the phenomenon to mean that the young Dauphin would receive the crown of the Empire, and would overthrow the Ottoman power.

Henry loved Fontainebleau. It was he who laid out the gardens and park, constructing the famous "Mail Henri-Quatre," and adorning the centre of the lake with its island temple. He constructed the grand canal, which was his special delight. In August, 1608, Malherbe wrote: "His canal at Fontainebleau is so great a passion with him that

even in the recent excessive heat he was as a rule seated on a stone from five or six in the morning until mid-day without any covering or shade watching his masons at work." Much of what he built has been altered by his successors, but the Galerie des Cerfs and the Galerie de Diane remain as monuments of his reign.

Nor were his building activities confined to Fontainebleau. He transformed Henry II's Château of St. Germain and constructed a series of magnificent terraces going down the Seine, all of which have now disappeared. He planned a new Paris with wide streets and no overhanging houses. The Pont-Neuf has already been mentioned. It had been begun in 1578 but the work had ceased soon after. He laid out a new street running directly from the bridge to the Porte-Bussy. He planned the Palais-Royal on the site of the Palais des Tournelles. Some of the new houses forming the Palais-Royal were built by him. Others were built by private individuals to whom he sold the land cheaply so that he could insist on every house conforming with his plan. He designed the Long Gallery at the Louvre which was intended to connect it with the Tuileries. This work, however, was not completed and the two palaces remained isolated until the days of Napoleon III.

In all his activities Henry had in mind not only the gratification of his personal desires but also the necessity for increasing the power and prestige of the French monarchy. At home he showed that he had ceased to be the rough soldier and had become the master of a united people. Abroad he was jealous of French honour and won great glory by his successful intervention in the quarrel between Venice and the Pope.

VI

There had long been a marked affinity between the political and religious outlook of Henry of France and the Signory of Venice. Both France and Venice were Catholic states, but both were remarkable for the "Politique" tendency which at the beginning of the seventeenth century was going far to modify the effects of the Counter-Reformation. This tendency was the obvious result of Venetian intercourse with heretics. Tolerance and opportunism alike marked the Republic and the Kingdom of Henry IV. As long ago as the 13th June, 1589, the French ambassador, Hurault de Maisse, had told his master that his opinion on these points was also that of the senate, and the Venetian envoys themselves told Henry in 1601 that "State interest made them have the same desires and plans as the French; it gave them common friends and enemies." The King had sealed this community of ideas by the gift of a suit of armour and the sword which he had used at Ivry.

The feud between Venice and the Pope had long been smouldering. The erastianism of the Church in Venice had caused successive Popes the greatest alarm. In 1589 Sixtus V had been infuriated by the Venetian recognition of Henry IV the King of France, for to him he was still only "Navarre, a heretic, excommunicated by the Holy See." Sixtus and Clement VIII, despite their fantastic plans for increasing the power of Rome, were, however, at bottom moderate men. Far different was Camillo Borghese, who was elected Pope as Paul V in May,

1605. His accession, in fact, made conflict inevitable, for he was the incarnation of spiritual aggression.

In December, 1605, he proposed to send a *breve* to Venice, to protest against the conduct of the republic with regard to three grievances. The first pertained to a decree of the senate passed in 1603 "that no Venetian citizen of any degree soever should, within the precincts of the city without the Senate's consent, build any new church hospital or monastery." As Donato, the Venetian ambassador at Rome, pointed out, half the city was already occupied by such foundations, and the ordinance was merely a repetition of a long series of restrictive laws. The second clerical grievance arose from a decree that all purchases of land for the Church could only be made with the consent of the government. The third was caused by Venetian disregard for *immunitas ecclesiae*, as shown in the arrest of two criminous clerks, Saracini and Brandolini, the one a master, as Sarpi said, of "the art of tempering and composing most subtle poisons," the other guilty of an indecent assault. The Venetians stoutly refused to give Paul any satisfaction, and on the 17th April, 1606, he put the Republic under an Interdict. Henceforth all marriages at Venice were to be null, all births illegitimate.

The Venetians, fortified by the skilful dialectics of Paolo Sarpi, refused to recognise the Interdict. The Jesuits and the Capuchins were expelled for expressing too open a sympathy with Rome. The effect on Europe was profound. The majority in France supported the Republic, for it was known that the Pope had been urged forward by Spain. Henry, indeed, owed Venice a debt, and it was at

first thought that its payment would be more than verbal. Thus the Englishman, Walter Younger, member of Parliament for Honiton, wrote in his diary that "the French King hath promised to aid the Venetians; the Spaniard aideth the Pope. . . . But," he added, "it is thought that peace will be concluded before any battle." A war, indeed, was unlikely, for Henry IV had no intention of sacrificing the fruits of the Treaty of Vervins. Moreover Philip III had no desire to risk a war in Italy as well as in the Low Countries, and accordingly he confined his activities to exhortations and moral support. Thus Sarpi wrote towards the end of 1608: "The Spaniards play their parts well; for it is not their interests to make any stir in Italy."

The controversy continued. Rome was aggressive, Venice adamant. The battle of words between Sarpi on the one hand and Bellarmin on the other went on until the situation became intolerable. Henry's offer of mediation was at last accepted. He sent Cardinal Joyeuse to Rome with full powers to treat between Rome and the Republic. The negotiation was one requiring great tact and diplomacy, and Du Fresne Canaye, the French ambassador, and Joyeuse had no light task to bring it to a peaceful conclusion, and at the same time to preserve the appearances so eagerly adhered to by both sides and the dignity which neither would abrogate. Finally Venice agreed to surrender the two ecclesiastics to the French ambassador, but it was made clear that it was done "out of respect for the most Christian King, on the previous understanding that the right of the Republic to judge her own clergy should not thereby be diminished." Henry IV

thought it expedient to sacrifice the reservation when he handed the criminals over to the Pope's delegate. Moreover, before the Interdict was withdrawn, Joyeuse succeeded, despite Venetian protests, in giving the State an informal absolution. Paul V would never have withdrawn the Interdict without it. Joyeuse reported this difficulty to Henry and concluded "at last we agreed that I should give them absolution in the College in the presence of Monsieur Du Fresne and some other of our people, and that a relation should be drawn up and sent to His Holiness."

Thus ended the famous controversy. The offending laws were not at once repealed, and the Jesuits remained in exile until 1657. Both Rome and Venice managed to keep up appearances, but it was Henry alone who gained prestige from the conflict. His conduct in the negotiations showed him to be no heretic, but a true son of the Church. He gained the gratitude of the Pope. At the same time his timely intervention saved Venice from an intolerable situation, and his alliance with the Republic was thereby strengthened. Nor was the effect on his position at home by any means negligible. He had shown that he was the equal of Spain in diplomacy, and that once again France was one of the great powers of Europe.

VII

If the Venetian incident was a triumph for Henry's persistent policy of cautious hostility to Spain, his intervention in the struggle between Spain and

the United Provinces, which roughly comprised the modern Kingdom of Holland, was an even greater success. The Dutch had no particular reason for gratitude to Henry. When he was fighting for his throne against Spain they had made a solemn alliance with him whereby he had promised not to make peace with the common enemy until the independence of the Low Countries had been recognised. Despite this he had signed the Treaty of Vervins, which excluded the Dutch from its operation. To counteract his perfidy, Henry had from time to time supplied them with a certain amount of money. In addition, he had allowed whole regiments of French volunteers to enlist in the service of the States. It was indeed an inexpensive way of ridding himself of turbulent subjects who only thrived on war, and at the same time of helping his allies without committing himself to open hostilities. As the struggle in the Netherlands, inspired by Oldenbarnevelt, the friend and admirer of William the Silent, continued to run out its weary course, Henry grew less and less inclined to devote a large part of his hard-won revenues to subsidising the Dutch. The position in Holland was that of stalemate. The Spaniards could not reduce the country to submission, and at the same time were too proud to admit defeat. It seemed to Henry that the only way out was to enforce a truce in which the exact legal status of the belligerents need not be defined.

In May, 1607, he sent President Jeannin to the Hague to negotiate a peace. An eight months' truce was quickly arranged, but as the term was drawing to an end, and the Spaniards showed no

signs of allowing the truce to be converted into a peace, Henry appreciated that the threat of war would have to be added to the compliments of diplomacy. Accordingly, at the beginning of January, 1608, he entered into an offensive and defensive alliance with the United Provinces. Henry, as yet, had no wish to resort to arms. The alliance was a mere threat, but it achieved its purpose.

In July, 1608, Don Pedro of Toledo, a man of most austere and rigid character, arrived at Fontainebleau to complain that such an alliance was an unwarranted breach of the treaties between France and Spain. Henry had reason to believe that he had come to find out how far he meant to carry out his threats. Those in authority in Spain believed that gout and illness had incapacitated Henry to such an extent that he would be unlikely to take the field. It is true that in the previous summer Henry had had a severe attack of dysentery brought on, it was said, by his inordinate appetite for melons. At the time of Don Pedro's visit, however, he was in excellent health. He received him in the long gallery at Fontainebleau, and resolved to give him a practical demonstration of his strength. Don Pedro was not such easy game as the fat and rheumatic Mayenne had been. Nevertheless, Henry had little difficulty in exhausting the Spaniard by making him walk the length of the gallery thirty or forty times at a prodigious pace. "You see now, sir," he said delightedly, "how well I am!"

At this audience Don Pedro represented to the King the general interest that all Catholic princes had in the ruin of heretics, and the great wars which his master had waged for that purpose. This

argument made no great appeal to the Politique ex-Huguenot. Don Pedro continued that the Most Catholic King was eager for a closer alliance with His Most Christian Majesty, and suggested the possibility of marriages between their children. These suggestions, of course, were made on the understanding that Henry would renounce his alliance with and protection of the Low Countries. Henry refused to listen to such suggestions, and when Don Pedro expatiated on the greatness and glory of Spain, Henry replied that the Spanish Empire, like the statue of Nebuchadnezzar, had feet of clay. High words ensued, until Henry remarked: "My lord ambassador, you are a Spaniard and I a Gascon; let us not grow angry."

On another occasion Henry showed him with pride his four months' old son, Gaston, first Duke of Anjou and destined, on his brother's death in 1611, to become Duke of Orléans. He then showed him over the whole palace of Fontainebleau, and with naïve pride asked him what he thought of it. Don Pedro remarked on the mean appearance of the two existing chapels, saying that "God was more poorly lodged than the King." Henry was never at a loss for a retort. "It is because," he replied, "the French do not enshrine their God, as do the Spaniards, only within four walls. They lodge Him also in their hearts." Nevertheless the taunt had its effect, and the fine chapel of the Holy Trinity, close to the great entrance of the palace, was the result. Upon it a number of French artists, such as Jean Dubois and possibly Pilon, have employed their genius under the direction of Freminet. Its elaborate decoration to-day bears witness to the

strong reaction against Protestant austerity which the seventeenth century witnessed in France.

Meanwhile Jeannin was still hard at work in Holland. One of his chief difficulties was the opposition of Prince Maurice of Orange, whose power depended on the continuance of the war, and who was virtually supreme in the province of Zealand. Maurice was first and last a soldier, and no statesman. His opposition was only removed by the personal threats of the King of France. "This man," said Henry, "always wants to command, and never to obey." Peace did not come until April, 1609, and then it was no more than a twelve years' truce, during which trade was to be free in the East Indies and the United Provinces were to be deemed independent.

Nevertheless the truce was a great triumph for French diplomacy. Henry's work was universally acclaimed, and his throne thereby strengthened. The Doge of Venice told the French ambassador in the senate that the Republic had fresh cause to admire the prudent conduct of the King; that he was the true upholder of the repose and felicity of Christendom; and that nothing more could be desired for the happiness of his Kingdom, but that he might reign for ever. More practical evidence of the magnitude of his achievements than this eulogy is the fact that the United Provinces remained the allies of France until the fruits of Henry's labour were dissipated by the megalomania of Louis XIV.

VIII

Henry was by now a great man in the eyes of France and of Europe, but he was still an object of loathing to his wife. Five children had been born to them, and they were to have one more, the ill-fated Henrietta Maria of England, born on the 26th November, 1609. Towards the end of 1608 the royal children suffered from a bad attack of measles, but Henry's anxiety for his illegitimate offspring was far from pleasing to the Queen. Her unbending attitude of covert hostility was excited by Leonora Galigai and her husband Concini. Henry begged her to dismiss them, "for," he said, "my heart tells me that this man and woman will one day cause much mischief, since I perceive in them projects inconsistent with their station and their duty." Sully acted as intermediary, but the Queen obstinately refused to do without her fellow-countrymen, however displeasing they were to her husband.

The period of Henriette de Verneuil's greatest influence was passing, but Henry still wished to provide for her children. He suggested to Sully a marriage between his son and Henriette's daughter, Gabrielle-Angélique, provided, of course, that Sully would turn Catholic. Sully rejected the suggestion at once, but that it had been made increased the Queen's resentment. So bad were the relations between them that Marie began to fear that if Henry found another Henriette he would stop at nothing until he obtained a divorce. She had given him

legitimate children ; the succession was assured ; her usefulness was over.

Nevertheless, the King and Queen still appeared in public together. The winter of 1608-9 was one of unparalleled severity, and when the thaw came the Loire overflowed its banks, causing tremendous damage. With the return of warmer weather there was an outburst of social activity in Paris. Queen Margaret gave a great party at her hôtel. A superb ballet was presented, attended by the King and Queen Marie. Henry was now on excellent terms with his former wife. He used to send the little Dauphin to see her. She expressed herself delighted with him.

One of Henry's greatest pleasures was to dine with Sully at the Arsenal, where the latter, as Grand Master of the Artillery, was busy collecting a vast quantity of materials of war. On one occasion, early in 1609, we are told of Sully giving the King an enormous banquet. After dinner the party sat down to cards. Henry was delighted to find that the thoughtful Sully had provided him with 4,000 pistoles for the game. Henry resolved to go there regularly in the future. "But next time," he declared, "I shall pay."

His relationship with Sully remained as informal as it had been at the time of Coutras and of Arques. Though the florid accounts of their interviews contained in the *Œconomies Royales* may be largely discounted, it is certain that Henry attached great weight to Sully's opinions. On one occasion later in the year, Henry came to the Arsenal very late at night. He found Sully dressed only in his night-cap, shirt and slippers. The King wanted his advice because

Villeroy and the Queen were urging him to make an alliance with Spain, cemented by a double marriage. Henry, on the other hand, said that he wanted to marry one of his daughters to a son of the Duke of Savoy, and another to the Prince of Wales, while his sons were to marry into the Houses of Savoy and Mantua. Sully was too staunch a Huguenot to countenance union with Spain. For those who had supported Henry during the civil wars, Spain would always be the enemy.

The designs of Spain in Navarre had been giving Henry fresh cause for alarm. In the previous year Spanish influence had been at work spreading disaffection in the Kingdom. In February, 1608, Henry had allowed the Jesuits to return to Béarn. Their appearance was most unwelcome to the Protestants of the south, but Henry had good reason to know that their sympathies were no longer with Spain. Early in 1609 Henry decided to strengthen his grip on his native land by publishing an edict uniting France and Navarre. He had often contemplated such a step, but it seems that at one time he had had an idea of keeping it as a separate heritage for his sister Catherine. Out of its revenue she might be able to pay her debts. However, Catherine had died in 1604 at the age of forty-five. At the end she was obsessed by the idea she was about to have a child, and on that account she refused all medical aid in her last illness. It was characteristic of Henry that he gave her house at St. Germain to the Queen, and that at Fontainebleau to the Marquise de Verneuil.

As time went on Henry began to show signs of the effect of long years of strain and worry. He

was often unwell. In June, 1608, he wrote to Sully :

“ Mon mal de gorge me continue et un mal d'oreille m'a pris qui me donne beaucoup de peine ; mais avec tout cela je suis si enrumé que je gaste huict ou dix mouchoirs pas jour et mouche aussi vert qu'on saurait faire en hiver.”

He was growing old. He had taken to wearing spectacles. He liked to sit in a low chair, specially designed for him by Sully. There he would sit talking long hours with his friends, pensively tapping his spectacle case. His passions, however, were not yet dead. In 1609 he first saw Charlotte de Montmorency, the last and most dangerous of his loves. She was ravishingly beautiful, and Henry there and then vowed that she should be his.

CHAPTER V

HENRY AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF FRANCE

I

HENRY OF NAVARRE came into power at a time when France was exhausted by civil war. Peace above all else was necessary. The country asked for government first and only incidentally for reform. France was, and is, one of the most naturally rich countries in the world. Her people, if left to themselves, could recover their former prosperity without outside aid. They surrendered themselves completely to Henry's monarchy. They allowed their ancient constitution and their individual liberty to fall into desuetude. In return they asked Henry for peace and for strong and honest government. His career had made him well fitted to grant them their desire. His position was always too precarious for him to wish for change merely for the sake of change. Genuinely solicitous for the well-being of the common people, he was the most conservative of reformers. His aims were never entirely disinterested. His experience had taught him that, to be strong, a King must also be rich. He confessed that the prime object of his home policy was to provide himself with the sinews of war. He differed only from the tyrant in two particulars—in the generosity and magnanimity of his character and

in his full appreciation of the ultimate connection between economic prosperity and political strength.

He was faced by tremendous difficulties, but he was able in the main to overcome them. Each problem was dealt with as the exigencies of the time demanded. The only political maxim which he consistently followed was his own dictum : " Pour bien régner il ne faut qu' un roi fasse tout ce qu' il peut faire." He was the supreme opportunist. He could be treacherous and ungrateful, but he never was unless he thought treachery and ingratitude were necessary to serve his ends, and therefore the ends of France. He modelled himself on Machiavelli's Prince, whose every act was directed to the good of his state. Like Machiavelli, Henry abhorred rigid political theory. He agreed that " it is necessary for a prince to have a mind ready to turn itself accordingly as the winds and variations of fortune force it, not to diverge from the good if he can avoid doing so, but if compelled, then to know how to set about it." Such considerations must be borne in mind in any survey of Henry's reforms. Above all, it must be remembered that he was never actuated by the enlightened principles of a Joseph II. Though he wanted his people to be happy, he wanted them to be happy almost entirely because he wanted his monarchy to be strong.

The first and most obvious of the dangers with which he had to contend was the independence shown by the nobles. Reference has already been made to the vast sums which he had to spend to buy their loyalty at the close of the civil wars. Even when they had made their submission to Henry they had no intention of abandoning their habit of entering into negotiations—treasonable and otherwise—with foreign states

Many nobles, such as Epernon in Languedoc, Mercœur in Brittany, and Bouillon in the north-east, were to all intents and purposes independent princes. All over the country the great lords, who for generations had ruled their estates regardless of the royal government were determined to maintain and increase their feudal privileges. They resented Henry's reliance upon men whose noble rank was of the humblest or who were frankly bourgeois in origin. Many great families had been financially ruined by the wars. But, though their estates were mortgaged to the hilt, they considered it beneath their dignity to live in a style less magnificent than that which had characterised the profligate court of Henry III, the luxury of which had far surpassed that of previous kings. It will be seen that Henry excluded them from all but honorary posts in the government. The result of their poverty and idleness was to encourage them in treason. Bouillon's revolt was largely due to poverty, and Biron's to idleness.

Henry and the common people had everything to gain from peace. The nobles had nothing. The King had no use for them at Court and encouraged them to return to their estates. They had nothing to do. "Some," says Bishop Péréfixe, "passed their time in hunting, others with ladies; some in pursuit of learning, others in travelling into foreign countries; while others again continued the exercise of war under Prince Maurice in Holland. But the greater part, whose hands, as it were, itched, and who sought to signalise their valour without departing from their country, became punctilious, and for the least word, or even for a wry look, put their hands to their swords. Thus that madness of duels entered into the hearts

of the gentlemen; and these combats were so frequent that the nobility shed as much blood in the meadows with their own hands as their enemies had made them lose in battle." Henry published two severe edicts prohibiting duelling on pain of arrest and confiscation of goods. Unfortunately these edicts were largely unenforced, and were in fact unenforceable. Moreover, Henry frequently pardoned offenders. When, in February, 1607, he stopped a duel between Condé and Nevers, although he reprimanded them both, his anger was chiefly directed against the latter, not because the royal edict had been infringed, but because he had dared to draw a sword against the first prince of the blood.

The luxury of the nobles displeased Henry more than their breaches of the peace. To set them an example, he habitually wore a grey cloak with a satin doublet without slashing, lace, or embroidery. He despised those who, as he said, "carried their mills, woods and forests on their backs." Yet it is not surprising that the nobility failed to take his example to heart. They could not change their character. Most of them were hopelessly in debt, and when they found that the King was adamant in his refusal to grant pensions, they began to screw money out of their overburdened peasantry in utter disregard of the law. Their task was made easy by the complete disorganisation of the country-side. The ruin of agriculture and industry during the civil wars led to frequent popular risings, which the nobles were quick to turn to their own advantage. Hordes of disbanded soldiers roamed the country-side, robbing and pillaging. The breakdown of the means of internal communication rendered the central government

powerless. Even in the capital disorder was rife. In 1599 Romas Platter of Bâle wrote : " There is less danger in travelling in a virgin forest than in the streets of Paris, especially when the lamps have been extinguished." In the provinces gangs of robbers, whose exploits far surpassed those of Robin Hood, levied a regular war against the forces of law and order.

The most famous of these gangs was led by the three brothers Guillery. They were men of noble family and at times their followers numbered more than five hundred. Originally supporters of the League, they never made their peace with Henry, but for nearly ten years levied a regular toll on the merchants and peasants of Brittany and the Vendée. The story of their robberies and of the state they maintained at their camp, where they lived like princes, is incredible to anyone who does not appreciate the disintegration of France at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In days when there was no standing police force, and when the royal army had been reduced to a minimum, it was no easy task to put an end to their activities. So serious did the position become, however, that, towards the end of 1608, Henry himself at last intervened. He ordered Parabère, Governor of Niort, to raise all the men he could and to besiege the Guillerys' fortress. This operation was eventually successful, but only after Parabère's forces, numbering over 4,500, had suffered great loss through a sortie of the youngest brother at the head of eighty men. Two of the brothers were eventually captured and broken on the wheel at La Rochelle.

Thus Henry's first and perhaps his most important

task was to restore order and so to revive public confidence. To this end he published an edict in 1598 forbidding firearms to be carried on the highways. The penalty for a first offence was the confiscation of the arms and, for a second, death. How far the edict was successful it is only possible to surmise, but the ineffectiveness of the central government makes it certain that infringements were frequent.

Henry was aided in his work of restoration of order by the passionate desire of the vast majority of the nation for peace. Henry was nothing if not active, and his firm attitude towards the greatest nobles who tried to disturb the peace, inspired the confidence of all. He supervised the activities of the provincial governors as never before. Nothing was too small for his attention. His aim was to give France peace and unity. His people surrendered themselves to him with confidence. Only by relying on the monarchy could peace at home and abroad be secured. The era of absolutism had come. French history is full of occasions when the mass of the people, worn out by wars or revolutions, has cried out for a saviour of society ; but on no such occasion has this illustrious part been more finely played.

II

The constitution of France at the beginning of Henry's reign was no less complicated and, at first sight, no more despotic than that of contemporary England. The reason why Henry of Navarre and his successors were able to establish themselves as absolute

monarchs to a degree beyond that to which the Tudors and Stuarts could attain was largely twofold. In England the power of the purse had never been surrendered to the King. In France it had. In the second place the three orders in France, Nobles, Clergy and Third Estate, remained mutually suspicious and independent, whereas in the English Parliament there was never an unbridgeable gulf between the two Houses.

In sixteenth century France the King's Council was the supreme executive council of the realm. It also exercised legislative powers through its ordinances or edicts. In addition it retained certain judicial powers. It was still a fluid body, with functions by no means rigidly defined. Henry found that its sphere of activity could easily and profitably be extended.

The supreme judicial body was the Parlement of Paris to which reference has frequently been made. This body was at once a court of law and a corporation of lawyers, somewhat analogous to our Inns of Court. It had the right of hearing appeals from all subordinate Courts. In addition it had certain semi-legislative powers for it could issue *arrêts* or injunctions of general application, and it also had the duty of registering all royal ordinances, treaties of peace and other public documents. Since the reign of Louis XI, moreover, it had exercised the right of refusing to register. This right amounted in effect to a right to veto royal legislation, but the King could always override its veto by holding a *Lit de Justice*. This procedure was not one which commended itself to Henry, for nothing was more calculated to inspire ill-feeling. The King summoned the

Parlement in solemn assembly before the Peers of France and the officers of State and peremptorily ordered it to register. It had no right to refuse.

There were also seven provincial Parlements—at Toulouse, Grenoble, Bordeaux, Dijon, Aix, Rouen and Rennes. These Parlements exercised the same authority as the Parlement of Paris within their districts, but the Parlement of Paris alone had to register all royal edicts. The members of the Parlements held office for life, and were, since the reign of Louis XI, irremovable, unless convicted of some penal offence. As membership was generally purchased from the King; the office became saleable, and, under Henry IV, hereditary.

Local administration was largely in the hands of *baillis* or *sénéchaux*, whose power, however, was declining owing to Francis I's creation of *Lieutenants*. Francis I had appointed twelve Lieutenants General over the frontier provinces. During the Civil War these were appointed for nearly all the Provinces. These Lieutenants General became known as Governors, and many of them became virtually independent. Henry succeeded in buying out a number, but their power was not finally overthrown till the time of Richelieu. It must also be remembered that the nobles still retained their seignorial courts and that many towns enjoyed widely differing forms of self-government. The independence of the towns, however, was often more apparent than real, owing to Henry's success in obtaining for himself, either by threats or by bribes, the right to veto their choice of officials or in arbitrarily remodelling their constitutions on the lines of Amiens, whose mayor was a royal nominee.

The institution which corresponded most nearly to the English Parliament was the Estates-General ; but in fact the two bodies had little in common. The States-General were composed of three chambers, consisting of deputies from the three orders of Nobles, Clergy and Third Estate. They were summoned, in theory at any rate, not to discuss, but to hear the will of the King and to present grievances. The procedure which was universally adopted makes it quite clear how enormously the States-General differed from the Stuart Parliaments. At the meeting of the States-General the three orders were summoned to a Royal Session, in which they were told of the reasons for the summons. The three orders then separated, and each order proceeded to draw up its separate *cahier* or petition, setting out its particular grievances and making recommendations for royal edicts. The several *cahiers* were then presented to the King, whereupon the assembly was dismissed without any answer being made to its petitions. Thus the States-General had no control of taxation and policy ; they could not insist on frequent or regular sessions : and they were entirely controlled by the King, since he was not even obliged to give a negative or evasive answer to its demands. He merely remained silent.

Such in outline was the machinery of government inherited by Henry. It was distinctly feudal and archaic in character, and it was by no means suited to the needs of the new national and centralised state which emerged from the civil wars. The system was characterised by the overwhelming number of officials, all of whom had to make a living out of the State. The royal governors had ceased to be royal

servants, and the States-General had never been a national assembly which a wise King could direct and upon which he could rely. Despite Bodin's doctrine of the sovereignty of the people, there was no general desire for, or even comprehension of, democratic principles. More popular were the theories of Loyseau, who thought that a King was entitled to absolute power, provided always that he exercised it in conformity with the laws of God, the natural and positive laws of justice and the fundamental laws of the state. No one ever knew what this reservation meant. Although Loyseau's theories were based on the identification of sovereignty with the right of property, it was but a short step from them to the absolutism of Louis XIV. The precise limits of royal power were not defined, nor did France, emerging from a generation of civil war and daily becoming more conscious of its nationhood, desire definition. The majority of the nation trusted Henry, and that was sufficient. Henry himself was no political theorist. Unlike James I of England, he propounded no formula of the divine right of Kings. He meant to be master in his own house and he would brook no opposition. The theories of Louis XIV may have been the logical outcome of this attitude of Henry IV, but there is a world of difference between Henry's assertive claim that "a King is responsible to God alone and to his conscience," and Louis' definite and unquestioned statement that "*l'état c'est moi.*"

Although the constitution of France underwent very great changes during his reign, Henry was no constitutional reformer. He did not attempt to remould the system which he inherited. He made no attack on the privileges of the nobles or clergy. All

he did was to allow certain parts of the constitution to fall into disuse and to emphasise and increase the importance of others. He did all he could to increase the power of the monarchy, not only because he desired to make himself all-powerful, but because no other institution in the Kingdom could compare with the monarchy in efficiency and because he felt that the loyalty of none was above suspicion.

The very centre of his government was the King's Council, which he re-organised to meet the demands of the new country. Before Henry's time the numbers, the functions and the powers of the Council were not fixed. The Council was in theory open to all the greater nobles and upper clergy, but Henry's policy reduced the number of effective counsellors to about twelve. These counsellors were men of very widely differing political antecedents, but none of them were nobles of the highest rank. Indeed, Henry purposely excluded the nobles from all but the honorary functions, so much so that it was said that "in this reign it is an honour not to have honour and office." The nobles as a whole were too proud to work with men of the type which Henry chose for his counsellors. Indeed Sully's attempt in 1607 to induce the great nobles to enter the *Conseil des Finances* met with almost complete failure.

The men upon whom Henry relied were not mere bourgeois, still less were they peasants. They belonged for the most part to the country gentleman class. Chief among them was Sully, who had proved his genius for making money in his early investments in horses. Others were Pomponne de Bellièvre and his son-in-law, Sillery, both of whom were famed for their adroit diplomacy and for the total lack

of emotion which characterised both their appearance and speech. Bellièvre, who was born in 1529 and had thus lived through the whole of the religious wars, was Chancellor from 1599 to 1604, while Sillery held that office from 1606 to 1616. Jeannin and Nicolas de Neufville de Villeroy, who was chief secretary of state, had both been adherents of the League, yet both served Henry well when he had won the throne. Henry also consulted Villars, who had once been in the pay of Spain, and Lesdiguières and Olivier de Serres, both of whom remained the most rigid of Huguenots. It says much for the King's personality that such men were willing to forget their past differences, and wholeheartedly to concentrate on his service. Henry's rule was despotic, but it was a sane and benevolent despotism, and the details were worked out, not by mere personal favourites, but by men of sturdy and independent character.

At the beginning of Henry's reign the Council appeared in three forms—the *Conseil Privé*, the *Conseil d'Etat et des Finances*, and the *Conseil pour la direction des Finances*, the duty of the last being merely to supply the information necessary for the deliberations of the second. Under Henry the functions of the various committees became more clearly demarcated. The *Conseil d'Etat et des Finances*, which was dominated by Sully, met regularly three times a week. The *Conseil Privé*, or the *Conseil des parties*, as it was generally called, met as a rule three times a week to carry on the judicial work of the Council. In addition, a further committee soon made its appearance. This was the informal and executive *Conseil des Affaires*, which met to consider the reports

of the four secretaries of state in order to advise the King on general matters of policy. Important though the council was, it had no power apart from the King. He alone had power. Though he was always willing to take advice, every decision was his own. He often conferred with his counsellors individually and informally. Bishop Péréfixe records that "he spoke to them of his affairs ; sometimes to be instructed, and sometimes to instruct them, which he did either in his study or walking in the gardens of the Tuileries, Monceaux, St. Germain and Fontainebleau. He discoursed often with them apart, summoning them one after another ; and he did this to oblige them to speak to him with more liberty, or not to tell them all together what he only wished to tell some particularly, or for some other reason which, without doubt, was due to good policy. He said that he found none amongst them who satisfied him like Villeroy, and that he could despatch more business with him in an hour than with the others in a whole day."

It was obvious that Henry was not going to allow the Parlements to extend their powers. On many occasions the Parlement of Paris was most unwilling to register his edicts, and particularly the Edict of Nantes. Nevertheless, Henry was never compelled to force registration by means of a *lit de justice*. It may well be that the comparative absence of friction between the King and the Parlements was largely due to the fact that Henry never tried to reform the judicial system in France. Certainly no one could say that reform was unnecessary. The officials of the Parlements were men of the upper middle class who had bought their offices or who had inherited

them as the greater part of their patrimony. Their salaries were small, and the only way in which they could make a living was by accepting or exacting "presents" from suitors. Moreover, the majority were related by marriage to the nobles who were the principal litigants in their Courts. It was no wonder that the poor were apt to complain that they could not obtain justice. Henry made no attempt to reform the system because the judges were irremovable and he had not the necessary money either to pay them proper salaries or to buy them out. In addition, he may have appreciated the undeniable fact that justice in France, unlike the financial system, never became criminally bad. This was primarily due to the fine traditions and corporate spirit which existed in the various Parlements.

The States-General was not a body likely to commend itself to Henry. To begin with, he fully realised what his people wanted. He needed no cumbrous argumentative assembly to tell him. The States-General represented feudal France—its want of cohesion, its rigid class divisions, its absence of effective local government. It was quite out of touch with the national France of the seventeenth century. Moreover, experience taught that the encouragement of an expression of their grievances from the three orders was anything but conducive to the tranquillity of the monarchy. The States-General had met three times during the sixteenth century (apart from the Estates summoned by the League in 1593), and on each occasion had demanded a fresh measure of privilege and independence. Henry avoided the possibility of having to grant constitutional concessions by the simple expedient of never summoning

the States-General at all. It is true that in 1596 he called an Assembly of Notables at Rouen, consisting of the peers, prelates and officers of justice and revenue, and that he made a vague offer to allow them some say in the matter of taxation. The offer, however, never came to anything, and was only made to induce the Assembly readily to provide money for his pressing needs.

The constitution of France was such that no *lex regia* was necessary to make Henry an absolute monarch. He was a strong man, and his will was predominant. He was fully aware of the limitations to which his power was subject. It was not necessary for him to make himself into a god. His people trusted him, and once he was established the possibility of a general rebellion or of a constitutional revolt was as remote as to be almost impossible. Because France craved strong government after misery and anarchy, he gave her irresponsible but benevolent monarchy, and she accepted his opportunist creation as a permanent system. Thus, because France loved Henry IV, who gave her peace, she had to endure Louis XIV, who thought only of wars, and the Revolution which plunged her into chaos.

III

Henry's task of restoring order and prosperity was by no means completed by the suppression of brigandage and the execution of a few recalcitrant nobles. It was essential for him to tackle the far more formidable task of the restoration of financial stability. Throughout her history France has been

notorious for her financial maladministration. Her greatest administrators—Sully, Colbert and Turgot—all failed to remedy the evil. Sully's difficulties were possibly greater than those of his successors, owing to the effects of the sudden influx of gold and silver into Europe during the sixteenth century, which lowered the value of money and rendered the old sources of revenue quite inadequate for the requirements of government.

When Sully became *Surintendant des Finances* in 1598, he discovered that the King's expenditure exceeded his revenue by something between fifty and sixty per cent. In addition, the public debt then stood at the unparalleled figure of 300,000,000 livres. Henry's difficulties were increased by the fact that he had been compelled to pledge a large part of his revenues for a century ahead. The whole financial organisation had almost broken down. The poor people were still paying enormous taxes, but no one knew where the money went. Finally everyone at Court, even his most trusted advisers, were in league with the tax-gatherers, and would not willingly surrender their perquisites.

France's external debt was enormous. Henry's creditors included powerful and potentially dangerous foreigners such as Queen Elizabeth, the Elector Palatine, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, the Swiss Confederation, and the Venetian Republic. Elizabeth's bill was both large and of long standing. In 1587 she had lent him a very considerable sum to raise an army in Germany. In 1589 and 1590 she had made advances totalling over £50,000 sterling, and in the three following years she had sent over £160,000 more for the payment of his troops in

Brittany and Normandy. By the time of his conversion he owed her over £300,000. Henry repaid practically nothing. Elizabeth was "stunned" by his cynical ingratitude, but she was not prepared to fight for her money. It is odd that while English historians have emphasised Henry's callousness and trickery, French writers have seen in these transactions one more example of the English queen's selfish concentration on purely English interests.

Henry tried to placate the Grand Duke of Tuscany by marrying his niece and by accepting a dowry only half as large as he had originally asked. Switzerland and Venice were in some measure repaid by Henry's generous championship of their liberties, but neither of them saw their gold returned.

Unfortunately, Henry could not raise an adequate revenue merely by ignoring a large part of his obligations. Much of the Royal Domain had been alienated, and even if it had not it could never have provided a sufficient revenue for Henry's needs. Money had to be raised from the people, but there was nothing Henry disliked and feared more than extortion. The people could not be contented subjects and useful soldiers if they were being perpetually mulcted by a host of greedy officials through whose hands but little reached the Treasury. Such had been the state of affairs almost throughout the civil war. As early as 1596 the King had expounded to Rosny his ideal. He told him that he intended "to elevate his own honour, glory and fortune, and also France's to the highest degree which I have always had in mind, that is, to re-establish this Kingdom in its greatest vigour and splendour, and to relieve my poor people whom I love as my

own children . . . from so many taxes, imposts, subsidies and oppressions of which they daily complain. . . ." Henry's aim was not purely humanitarian. He hated waste and injustice. He wanted a steady and easily collected revenue. Bitter experience had taught him how hard it was to be a King with an empty treasure chest. An ample income was at once the secret of security and the sinews of war.

The financial system, as he found it, was appalling in its costly inefficiency. Apart from the feudal incidents and profits of justice, the principal source of revenue was the *taille*. This direct tax was of two varieties. In the *Pays d'Etats* (being the provinces more recently incorporated in the Kingdom and comprising about one-quarter of France) it was generally a tax on the value of land, assessed regularly under the orders of Provincial Assemblies. In the rest of France, known as the *Pays d'élection* the *taille* was a tax levied on presumed income from whatever source. Income tax returns, as they exist to-day, are the invention of the nineteenth century. In the seventeenth it would have been impossible to make people fill up such forms, and it would have been yet more difficult to check the accuracy of those returns. Accordingly a scheme was adopted which at least had the merit of simplicity. Local collectors had to bring in a certain sum, and it was left to them to raise the money from individuals as they liked. Thus, in the *Pays d'élection* the *taille* was virtually a poll tax, except that those who were unpopular with the collector were almost certain to have to pay more than their neighbours. What happened was this: the country was divided up

into twenty-one generalities, and each generality into numerous *élections*. An unelected "*Elu*," or tax farmer, bought the right of collecting the *taille* in his *élection* from the treasury for a round sum. He then assessed a sum to be raised by each parish which would not only recoup the purchase price, but would leave him a good margin by way of profit. Within each parish *assesseurs* were elected to collect the *taille* from the individual taxpayers: for this they received no remuneration, and, if they failed to make up the quota, they had to pay the deficiency or go to prison. Consequently there was no competition for the elective and honorary office of *assesseur*; in some villages a good proportion of the peasants were in gaol through failure to collect the *taille*. The *élus* were meant to be under the control of a central semi-judicial, semi-administrative body known as the *Cour des Aides*; but, as the King had perforce to be a perpetual borrower from the *élus*, the auditing of their accounts was rarely more than a formality.

Undoubtedly wasteful though the system of tax-farming was, the chief objection to the *taille* was that, owing to the number of people who were exempt, the tax fell almost exclusively on the lower classes. Among the privileged were the Nobles, who were supposed to serve the King in the feudal array; the Clergy, who from time to time supplied the King with what were euphemistically called *dons gratuits*; students at the Universities, municipal authorities and royal officials, whose numbers were enormous and constantly increasing owing to the King's desire to secure ready cash by the sale of new offices.

Indirect taxes—*aides* or duties on wine and food-stuff, the *gabelle* or salt tax, and the customs which were levied at the frontiers of every province—were farmed out like the *taille*, and only a very small proportion of the sums extorted found its way into the royal treasury. Henry did nothing to reform the system of the collection of the *gabelle*, and it is worth while pausing to make a brief examination of that system, if only for the purpose of emphasising that Henry's age was not a modern age, and that Henry was not a modern King. The abuses which he regarded as inevitable and which he probably never appreciated to be abuses at all, compel us to regard him as belonging not to an age of enlightened despotism, but in some degree to one of mediæval obscurantism.

The *gabelle*, needless to say, was not uniformly assessed. Five provinces, such as Béarn and Brittany, were altogether exempt. Of the remainder, roughly half were known as *Pays de Petite Gabelle*, and the others *Pays de Grande Gabelle*. In Henry's time salt was of even greater importance than to-day. It was then impossible to keep cattle through the winter, and in autumn a vast number were killed and salted. As the majority of the people were Catholic, salt fish was the staple diet on Fridays and fast days. So strong was this custom that we find that Queen Margaret, while at the Protestant court in July, 1580, insisted on having a meal of eels and cod on Friday, although her husband and his companions consumed an incredible quantity of veal, mutton, chickens, turkeys and bacon. In addition, salt was frequently used as a fertiliser and for tanning. In seventeenth-century France, salt was

a royal monopoly, and could only be sold by licensed retailers or *regrateurs*. Every household had to buy a minimum quantity of salt for every member above the age of eight. An interesting sidelight on the lack of cohesion in Henry's France is the fact that the retailers were able to buy their supplies in the coinage of Tours, and to sell it only for money of Paris, thus making 25 per cent. profit on the exchange alone. On the coast there was a great temptation to obtain salt from brine, for its quality was superior to much of that sold by the *regrateurs*. The Government sold several different grades of salt, but attempts to economise by using coarser kinds for domestic purposes were rigorously suppressed. Elaborate registers were kept, and a host of officials was employed to see that the requisite purchases were made, that they were used for the specified objects, and that no salt was used which had not been bought from the official vendors. Needless to say, there was an extensive trade in salt-smuggling, or "*faux saunage*." Not only was the system corrupt and oppressive, but, however many officials were created, it was impossible to enforce it. It was typical of the seventeenth century which was the golden age of administrative inefficiency.

Such, then, was the financial organisation inherited by Henry. A great statesman might have tried to abolish it and to start afresh. The attempt—however laudable—would have ended in failure or revolution. It is probable that Henry never contemplated such an idea. It is true he did not wish his people to be oppressed, but he wanted money. Financial administration was for the most part left to Sully, who, industrious and honest though

he was, had not the imagination which is needed by a great reformer. The privileged classes were left untouched. Neither King nor minister felt strong enough to attack them. The system of tax-farming remained. It was indeed universal in the seventeenth century. Sully was a conscientious administrator. He was no reformer, but he shone in contrast to his predecessors. He gave France all that was immediately necessary.

His energy was largely devoted to the preservation of the old sources of revenue. Henry's generosity was no legend ; he could not keep himself from spending. Sully, on the contrary, never spent a penny if he could help it, and he did Henry an inestimable service by intervening between the King and the swarm of insatiable courtiers who hoped to batten on Henry's prodigality. His sarcastic refusal to listen to the pleas of would-be pensioners gained him much unpopularity, but Henry stood by him, for he knew the necessity for economy. James I spent untold sums on Somerset, as did Philip III on Lerma, but Henry IV had no such favourites. Sully was compelled to provide for the royal mistresses, but even Henriette's wiles could secure little for her family. Unaccustomed to such treatment, the Entragues flirted with treason.

Sully's chief efforts were directed not so much towards reform but to the buying out or expropriation of the middle-men and to the simplification of the financial system. Already in 1598 the King, on his advice, remitted all arrears of *taille*. In the same year he inspected four of the generalities and collected an immense sum from them which had previously been diverted from the royal coffers. Despite the fact that

most of the farmers-general had friends or relations at Court, he compelled a large number of them to take out new leases for which they had to pay double. This success fell far short of what he had hoped would result from the work of the judicial committee which Henry had set up in the previous year to inquire into the misdeeds of the more notorious extortioners. Unfortunately, the more wealthy officials had adroitly induced Henry to accept a large "loan" of 600,000 livres, in return for which the commission was cancelled. Thereupon they exacted contributions from their subordinate officials. The net result was that the "*grands voleurs*" made a handsome profit out of the transaction and that it was the "*petits larronneux*" who paid the fine, doubtless recouped out of the pockets of the long-suffering peasantry. Sully, however, continued the war against the dishonest tax gatherer. In 1601 a tribunal known as the *Chambre Royale* was set up to inquire further into financial malversations. Its success was limited, but the government was able to buy up a large number of redundant offices. Unfortunately, the King's constant lack of ready money caused him to create almost as many new offices, which, however, were sold for much higher prices.

Henry's efforts to reduce the national debt did not meet with unqualified success. The bulk of the funded debt was in the form of national life annuities or *rentes*. It is not surprising to learn that there was no regular system and that even the rate of interest was not uniform. A large part of this stock was issued by the Hôtel de Ville of Paris and the remainder by private bankers, who were notoriously dishonest. Sully's object was to hold an inquisition to examine

all certificates and to annul those of doubtful authenticity. He further hoped to fix the rate of interest at a uniform and reduced level. The outcry in Paris was tremendous. Most of the stockholders were transferees for value. A deputation waited upon Miron, the Provost of the Merchants, the chief municipal officer. Miron espoused their cause and remonstrated with the King. Henry was naturally unwilling to provoke a storm and gave in. Sully, however, was not defeated. He caused the value of the stock to fall by the simple expedient of paying no more than a quarter of the nominal dividend. He thereupon bought up great blocks of stock and cancelled them.

Sully's capacity for hard work was infinite. Not only was he Superintendent of Finance, but he was also Grand Master of Artillery, Director of Communications and Controller of Public Buildings. In the later years of the reign his office at the Arsenal was the wonder of the age. It was remarkable for its order and routine. Sully himself worked early and late, often in consultation with the King. He was paid no regular salary, but he nevertheless contrived to amass a large private fortune, which he himself attributed to royal gifts. By the standards of his age, however, he was scrupulously honest. Comparative honesty indeed is the keynote of his administration, and his greatest claim to the respect of succeeding generations. He was the first finance minister to introduce regular annual budgets. Henry made this possible by refraining as far as he could from spending money when revenue was short. The income of future years was not anticipated. The *taille* was reduced in 1598 and again in 1600 and 1602,

though it is typical of the administration that the reduction was accompanied by an increase in the *gabelle*. The policy of redeeming alienated sources of revenue, the costly schemes undertaken for the benefit of industry and agriculture, and above all the necessity for amassing large armaments made it impossible for these concessions to be maintained. Sully's later budgets, though as a rule they still showed a surplus, were not genuine. The true position was cleverly concealed. Heavy new taxes were imposed, which met with great opposition. In 1609 Marshal d'Ornano, Governor of Guyenne, told Henry that a revolt of the peasantry against these taxes was imminent. In September of the same year Henry's popularity was jeopardised by an attempt to debase the coinage. Nevertheless, Sully had been able to heap up a vast treasure in the vaults of the Bastille for use in a national emergency. He had stopped the peculations of his subordinates and by his firm and active policy had saved France from bankruptcy, and had raised her credit to a level never attained by her chief rival, Spain.

The ancient sources of revenue were obviously inadequate and new ones had to be found. Henry's first experiment was a disastrous failure. At the time of the Assembly of the Notables at Rouen in 1596, Henry introduced at its suggestion a tax known as the *pancarte*. This was a tax of one sou per livre, or five per cent., on all sales in towns, villages and markets. The *pancarte* was immensely unpopular, partly owing to the fact that several members of the council were pensioners of the farmers and therefore supported them in their extortions. It is to Henry's credit that he always knew when to withdraw. He

had none of the perverse obstinacy of his son-in-law, Charles I of England. In 1602 he allowed the tax to be abolished.

His second experiment was the tax known as the *Paulette*, so called from the circumstance of it having been farmed for six years from 1605 to one Charles Paulet. Henry had long sought to turn the multiplicity of offices to his own profit. Their cost had been increased and he had subdivided them so that several persons paid for the same office. The *Paulette* was an annual tax amounting to one-sixtieth of the net annual value of every office, in return for which the officials obtained, in effect, the right of bequeathing their offices to their heirs. Thus all administrative and judicial offices became hereditary in the sense that the heir could succeed if he had the minimum qualifications. Where there was no such heir the State, in theory, purchased the office by repaying the original price. Needless to say, practice rarely corresponded with theory, for the King was always unwilling to discharge this heavy liability, and accordingly he was always slow to disinherit an incompetent heir. The new tax brought in a considerable revenue. With the increasing wealth of the bourgeoisie there was greater competition for these offices, and consequently higher prices could be asked. Every bourgeois was anxious to gain exemption from the *taille*, which not only saved him money but spared him from annual degradation in the eyes of the nobles to whose rank he aspired. In seventeenth century France to pay taxes was a mark of social inferiority.

Henry's encouragement of the open sale of offices is disappointing to his admirers. It is true that he was merely following the example of his predecessors,

Francis I, Henry II, Charles IX and Henry III, but in his day the evil was not incurable. He might have suppressed superfluous offices as they became vacant, or, had his revenues been sufficient, he might have bought them from their holders. Unfortunately he had neither the resources nor the inclination to carry out such a policy. He needed every penny he could screw out of the people to re-establish national solvency and to build up the army, which was ever his chief care. The whole of his financial administration was directed towards making France unequalled in military power. He had little use for reform for reform's sake, and Sully had not the vision to appreciate that in order to establish true financial solidity it was necessary to sacrifice uneconomic and dangerous sources of revenue.

On the other hand, Henry's policy was not completely short-sighted. So many had—or thought they had—claims to his gratitude that it was almost impossible to refuse to fill up the vacant offices, and in these circumstances a refusal to an easy profit from the conferring of favours seemed, to say the least of it, quixotic. In addition the *Paulette* was the only tax which was willingly paid. A more statesmanlike justification or rather explanation of Henry's policy, however, can be found in his undoubted desire to establish a *noblesse de la robe* to counterbalance the old military nobility. The new class owed its position solely to him. He could, therefore, rely implicitly on its loyalty. The unsatisfactory attitude of the old nobility, who would engage in no profession save that of arms, has already been noted. An absolute monarchy cannot function properly without a devoted bureaucracy. Henry found it impossible to rely on

the nobles who were by birth the natural leaders of France. It was partly in order to establish a new class, independent because secure, and loyal because newly created, that Henry tolerated and extended the unfortunate system inaugurated by his predecessors.

IV

None of Henry's financial measures were undertaken without an eye to its effect upon the relations between the House of Bourbon and the House of Habsburg. In the civil wars the Habsburgs had come within an ace of reducing France to a mere province of Spain. Henry's achievement was to make such an event impossible in the future. In order to attain security he must have money, he must have an army and the materials of war. His whole policy with regard to industry and agriculture is explicable only on this basis.

The reorganisation of the army was for the most part Henry's own work. Its chief characteristics were the creation of a regular body of long term soldiers and the elimination of foreign mercenaries. Henceforth the Swiss guards and the German *lansquenets* do not altogether disappear from French history, but they are no more than the auxiliaries of a national army. Henry was the first King to devote his attention to improving the condition of the lower officers and the common soldiers. He exempted their widows and orphans from all taxes; and more remarkable still, in an age characterised by a callous indifference to suffering, was the care he lavished on old and wounded soldiers. On the 7th July, 1605, he

published an edict giving certain old soldiers a retreat in the "maison royale de la Charité Chrétienne" in the Faubourg St. Marcian at Paris. Splendid work was done in the hospital, in which the King, ever touched by the sufferings of others, displayed a lively interest. Its considerable endowments were afterwards applied towards the foundation of the Invalides. Two years later he founded another institution, this time not exclusively military, known as the Hôpital St. Louis. Officers ceased to be wholly recruited from the nobility and two military academies were opened to all classes. Thus, for the most part, Henry directed his energies towards the creation not of a large, but of an efficient and well equipped army.

Henry's successes at Arques and Ivry had in part been due to his successful use of a pitifully small number of guns. During the last years of his reign the artillery was vastly increased. From 1599 Sully was Grand Master, and by 1610 an immense amount of war materials of all kinds had been collected in the Arsenal at Paris. Frontier towns, such as Laon, Ham, Calais, Grenoble, Antibes and Toulon, were fortified. Much of the work was entrusted to Errard, who had studied the art of fortification in Italy. Largely in the interests of economy, Henry concentrated on collecting supplies of war material. He even reduced the personnel of the army, relying on the existence of a large body of trained men whom he could call up at short notice. Thus at the end of his reign he had little difficulty in mobilising a vast and well-equipped army.

The military reforms, however, were not fundamental. The reorganisation of the fighting services was left to Louis XIV's minister Louvois. Under

Henry IV private persons were still responsible for raising their own regiments, and uniforms were still the exception rather than the rule. At the same time Henry pointed the way. He appreciated the need for a strong and efficient army, and in his time France was made safe from invasion.

VI

Before dealing with Henry's efforts to support French industry and agriculture, it is essential to appreciate the financial and military objects of his policy. He undoubtedly wished to improve the lot of his people. He was noted for his "charm and gladness of character," and his genuine sympathy is the secret of much of his popularity. At the same time it is impossible to understand his apparent inconsistencies unless his aim is realised—that is to say, the immediate ascendancy of France in Europe.

It is to Henry's credit that he was among the first to appreciate that the true wealth of a nation is to be found in the prosperity of her peasantry. Sully's remark has become a byword: "*Le labourage et le pâturage sont les deux mamelles dont la France est alimentée, et les vraies mines et trésors du Pérou.*" A more famous dictum still is that made by Henry himself to the Duke of Savoy in 1600: "If God gives me a long enough life, I shall see that there will not be a peasant in my Kingdom who is not able to have a chicken in his pot on Sundays." This attitude was not inspired by purely humanitarian motives. In 1610 Henry was informed of the unjust extortions which were still being made from the peasants all

over the Kingdom. His reaction was significant. "What!" he said, "if they ruin my people who give me my strength, who will undertake the expenses of the State, who will pay your pensions, gentlemen? *Vive Dieu*, to steal from my people is to steal from me."

At the beginning of Henry's reign French agriculture had sunk to its lowest level. Farmers could not be expected to plough and sow if more likely than not their young crops would be trodden down by marauding soldiers and their men taken for the army. The greatest service any government could do was to restore order and to suppress brigandage and this, as has been said, was Henry's first task. The second was to reduce taxation; towards this end Henry did something if not very much. Arrears of *taille* were forgiven, and the peasants were further relieved in 1600 by an edict which compelled the bourgeois and newly-created nobles to pay a share of tithe. Another edict, reminiscent of a famous clause in Magna Carta, forbade the confiscation of farm implements and horses for failure to pay the *taille*. The peasantry were further protected by two more edicts of June, 1601, and July, 1607, which greatly restricted the nobles' privilege of hunting over the cornfields at all seasons of the year. Finally, in 1601, Henry effected a great reform, despite the opposition of the Parlement of Toulouse, by allowing liberty of commerce in grain and wine as between province and province. Hitherto there had been frequent cases of a glut in one province and a famine in the next, since excessive dues had made it virtually impossible to take goods across the provincial frontiers.

These measures did much to restore agriculture, but Henry's plans were far more ambitious. His

military projects made it imperative that France should be self-supporting and the possibility of famine remote. A more scientific method of farming was necessary, and Henry at once interested himself in the work of Oliver de Serres, a Huguenot, who in 1600 published his famous book, "*Théâtre d'agriculture et mesnage des Champs.*" One of the principal objects of the book, and one which especially appealed to Henry, was the desire to interest the nobility in agriculture. Henry perceived that it was only thus that they could be peacefully and profitably occupied, and that it was only through an enlightened and public-spirited land-holding class that a scientific improvement of agriculture on a national basis was possible. In Henry's time methods of farming were most primitive. Implements were for the most part made of wood. Nicot had recently introduced the potato as a food for cattle only, but as a general rule farmers found it impossible to keep livestock through the winter. Improvement of the breed was thus impossible. The owners of the soil were quite indifferent to methods of cultivation. They were interested in the land merely so far as it provided facilities for sport. Unfortunately, Henry and Olivier de Serres were unable to change the traditional outlook of the nobility, and thus no lasting improvement of French agriculture was possible.

The State did what it could. To encourage farmers it permitted for the first time the export of corn save in times of scarcity. In order to exterminate the wolves, the number of which had increased alarmingly during the civil wars, it established an official body known as the "*louveteriers.*" It turned its attention to the problem of land

drainage. On the 8th April, 1599, Henry appointed a Dutchman from Bergen-op-Zoom "master of the dykes," and ordered him to make a start at once. The unfortunate "master of the dykes," however, was provided with no money for the task, and it is not surprising that his labours came to very little. A certain amount of work was, in fact, put in hand in connection with the marshes round Bordeaux. More money was forthcoming for another of the royal projects—the establishment of centres for the state breeding of horses. Sully was always interested in horses, and himself made a small fortune out of breeding them. Besides, the scheme had a direct and obvious military value.

The most remarkable feature, perhaps, of Henry's administration was the encouragement he gave to the silk trade. Here he was supported by Olivier de Serres, who in 1599 set out his ideas in a treatise called "*Cueillette de la soie par la nourriture des vers qui la font*," and by another Huguenot named Barthélemy Laffemas. Henry was enthusiastic at the idea of finding work for the unemployed, and of building up an industry which would provide France with a staple export trade. Sully, in his dour but efficacious manner, opposed the scheme. In 1603 the King reasoned with him at the Arsenal. "I do not know," he said, "what has put into your head the idea of opposing my schemes for my own private contentment, and for the beautifying and enriching of my Kingdom and for the removal of idleness among my people." Sully was ready with his answer. He emphasised the danger of dependence on a luxury trade. Furthermore, he asserted that the French climate was not suitable

for the cultivation of mulberries, and finally that those engaged in the production of silk lived inactive lives and would, therefore, make bad soldiers. Nevertheless, Henry was not deterred, and in the following year we find him writing to Sully urging him to hurry forward the completion of the Orangery at the Tuileries to receive the silkworms which he was having sent from the south. "Vous savez comme j'affectionne cela." Unfortunately Sully largely controlled the royal purse, and Henry had little time to deal with the matter himself.

A considerable amount, however, was done to foster and revive the industry. Experiments in the cultivation of the mulberry tree and the silkworm were made in the central and southern provinces, the material, including the official text-book, being supplied by the government. A corps of instructors, prominent in which were two Parisians, Le Tellier and Chevalier, was provided to give practical help to anyone interested. The only unfortunate part of the scheme was that all the expenses had to be paid by the people who were assisted. The peasants who went in for silk production were immediately assessed for increased *taille*. This fatal economy ruined the scheme. The peasants were already overtaxed, and the new imposition dragged many below the subsistence line. The fear of increased taxation and traditional hostility to innovations made few Frenchmen engage in the production of silk, and here again Henry's efforts were largely abortive. Nevertheless, a beginning had been made, and Colbert's later development of this important industry was made possible by the plantations of mulberry trees started during the reign of Henry of Navarre.

VII

In the industrial and commercial spheres the reign is characterised by a spate of legislation, a little practical encouragement and a short-sighted, though maybe a necessary, economy. Every attempt at reform was done with an eye to military efficiency. Although Henry differed from Sully in his belief that luxury trades might in certain circumstances be economically defensible, both agreed that military self-sufficiency was paramount. Moreover, Henry was seriously alarmed by the political repercussions of chronic unemployment. On one occasion he remarked, with truth, that "the development of manufactures offers the best security against civil broils and disorders."

Nothing was further from Henry's mind than a scheme of radical industrial reform. Indeed, much of his energy was devoted to bolstering up the medieval gild system which had largely broken down owing to the stress of the wars and the rapid influx of silver, which had the effect of lowering the value of money and making a system of fixed wages unworkable. Industry based upon gilds, traditional in their organisation and jealous of interlopers, naturally prevented expansion and retarded improvements. Henry may well have appreciated this, but he justified his policy to himself by the considerable duties paid to the government on the admission of men into the gilds, and to the world by the theory that the system encouraged the manufacture of better quality goods.

At the same time he did what he could to foster

new industries. He richly rewarded the Englishman Lee, who had invented a stocking knitting machine which had aroused nothing but distaste in Elizabeth. Nor was Lee the only foreigner encouraged by Henry. Turato, a manufacturer of gold cloth, came from Milan to teach his craft to the French. During the reign the famous manufacture of tapestry at the Gobelins was begun. On the 15th March, 1607, we find Henry writing to Sully telling him to pay 100,000 livres to some Flemish tapestry workers, whom he had persuaded to come to France, adding : "j'ai un extrême désir de les conserver." He also encouraged the glass industry, giving the brothers Sarrode, whose skill was undoubted, a monopoly of manufacture within thirty leagues of Paris. He even went so far as to publish an edict in 1603 giving nobles the right to manufacture glass without derogating from their nobility. It is more than doubtful, however, if there was any reponse to the edict. Above all, he did what he could to foster the silk weaving industry, showing particular favour to one Saintot, who was the first really successful silk manufacturer in Paris. The Assemblée de Commerce was founded largely at the suggestion of Laffemas in 1601. Here everything to do with industry was discussed—hours of labour, apprenticeship and schemes for new manufactures, such as those of glass, gold thread, linen and carpets. Although Henry's reign may not have witnessed much practical development, yet it is marked by a welcome revival of interest in industry. The foundations were securely laid for the work of Richelieu and of Colbert.

Henry's efforts were confined to the support of

luxury industries. This was so for two reasons. First, because in the seventeenth century there were in effect few or no other manufactures. In Henry's day the word industry would have connoted the manufacture of goods which the common man could or had to do without. In the second place the import of luxuries meant the export of gold, and in days before international credit was widely understood no state was thought safe which had not a vast gold reserve for time of emergency. He thus discouraged the import of manufactures and the export of raw materials. In Henry's policy can be seen quite clearly the principles of the mercantile school.

His encouragement of industry led him to take steps to encourage commerce. Henry has the honour of being the first French King to interest himself in overseas trade. Thus we find Evelyn writing to Pepys on the 19th September, 1682, concerning the importance of sea-borne trade: "As to Henry IV of France, it is evident that he was not negligent of his interest there (i.e. overseas trade), by his many projects for trade and the performances at Marseilles: all that Richelieu and his successors in that ministry produced was projected by their great Henry." Henry negotiated a series of commercial treaties. He had been on good terms with the Porte since 1590, and later he secured favourable trading arrangements by treaty, and also what must have been the first "capitulation" in the Levant. The Sultan agreed that all foreigners in Constantinople, except English and Venetian subjects, should be tried in the court of the French consul. In 1605 a treaty with James I for the first time put French traders in England on an equal footing with English traders

in France. In 1604 he signed a commercial treaty with the important Hansa towns of North Germany, and two years later he sent Arnault de l'Isle to negotiate trading concessions with Moulay Zeidan, the Sultan of Morocco. As might have been expected, commercial relations with Spain were often strained. In 1603 alleged breaches of the treaty of Vervins—and, in particular, Henry's support of the Dutch—led to a series of retaliatory duties: first, an additional impost of 30 per cent. on all goods passing from France into Spanish territories, and later, all commerce between France and the Spanish Netherlands was forbidden. This policy provided English captains with a heaven-sent opportunity to indulge in lucrative smuggling. French shippers were ruined and eventually, after threats of war on both sides, a more or less satisfactory peace was arranged.

Much good resulted from these treaties, but Henry was not so successful in his attempt to insure the safety of the seas. The treaty with England provided that both powers should unite to suppress the plague of piracy, but little was done, and the seas continued to be infested by Barbary and Levantine freebooters. Another of Henry's schemes met with less success than it deserved. In 1604 he granted a charter for fifteen years to a French East India Company. Dutch merchants were persuaded to come to instruct the French, but the Company had little official support, and it was eventually killed by the far wealthier Dutch East India Company.

Nor did Henry disregard the possibilities which the New World was at that time beginning to offer to European nations. In 1598 he appointed the Breton

Marquis de la Roche Lieutenant-General of Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador. Unfortunately the bulk of the settlers whom he took with him—a motley collection of prisoners, criminals and beggars—perished by shipwreck, and the remainder by the privations of the North American winter. In 1599 two men were given the monopoly of the St. Lawrence trade “on condition they inhabited the country and made settlements there.” But this was just what the French were unable to do. The English Puritans crossed the ocean with their households, but the early French Colonists were unaccompanied by their wives, although they had no prejudice against allying themselves with Indian women. One Louis Hébert, when he brought his family over in 1617, nine years after the founding of Quebec, stated that he was “the head of the first French family which came to live in the country, though it has been inhabited since the beginning of the century; that he brought with him all his goods and chattels from Paris, where he leaves relations and friends, in order to lay the foundation of a Christian colony.” In addition, the French took more easily to the roaming and exciting life of hunters and trappers than to that of merchants and farmers. There was no proper colonisation in Henry’s time; his interest in the New World was directed solely towards the expansion of trade. Sully obstinately opposed the King’s projects on the ground that settlements in North America could bring France no wealth since no gold was to be found in those latitudes. Henry, however, was not deterred, and on 8th November, 1603, gave a patent to Pierre de Monts, a gentleman of the chamber, “for

inhabiting Acadia, Canada and other places in New France." In 1604 Monts left Havre with two ships of 120 and 150 tons. Henry also gave his support to Champlain, the founder of Port Royal, which later came to be known as Annapolis. In 1608 Monts and Champlain managed to establish a prosperous settlement at Quebec. The project was not popular in France. All that was forthcoming from Henry was a charter and his moral support.

VIII

Henry thus did much to assist overseas trade, but he also had to deal with the problem of internal trade. During the wars it had been almost impossible to travel from place to place. So bad was the state of the roads that Laffemas complained that it was not unusual to be compelled to make a detour of thirty or forty leagues. It was useless to break down provincial customs barriers if it was physically impossible to transport goods from province to province. Henry worked hard to give France the finest system of communications in Europe. Such a task, moreover, had an obvious military value.

In 1599 he created a new office by making Sully *Grand Voyer de France*. Despite a rigid economy, much work was done, mostly by the forced labour of peasants, towards improving the roads. New roads were constructed flanked with trees—for the most part elms, which were nicknamed Rosnys. Further, Henry did what he could to improve the actual method of transport. In 1594 there were no public

means of communication other than certain postal services established by Louis XI, and three coach routes. An edict published in 1597 established, in theory at any rate, relays of horses on all the principal roads. For twenty sous a traveller could hire a horse for a day. The number of coaches was greatly increased, and the postal services were reorganised on the relay system, which was to play such a large part in the history of French travel until the coming of the railways.

It was, however, the idea of a national system of canals that made most appeal to Henry. An interesting letter from Joyeuse, when Governor of Languedoc in 1598, illustrates the interest taken by Henry and Sully in the proposed canal joining the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, and it gives an estimate of its cost. Montmorency in 1604 made a detailed examination of the course of the future canal. The King's untimely death prevented the realisation of the scheme, but this was not the only canal contemplated by Henry. A good deal was done in the construction of a canal joining the Seine and the Loire. At Henry's death seven of the nine leagues of its length were completed, and the work was finished during the reign of Louis XIII. It was the first great internal waterway of modern France.

Any survey of Henry's administration brings home the immense width of his interests, his untiring energy and his genuine humanitarianism. It also emphasises his lack of thoroughness and his determination not to lose one penny of revenue, however uneconomic its source. Maybe he was not altogether to blame. He had less than twelve years of peace,

and his whole administration depended on him personally. Distances were so great that he could not hope to supervise everything. He did not attempt reform, but he insisted, as far as possible, on honesty in the administration. That was indeed something new. Sully's budgets were largely faked, but if his figures were open to challenge, the value of his services to the state was not. France was naturally rich. To recover her prosperity she wanted nothing but to be left alone. The nation itself was mainly responsible for the restoration of its fortunes. It was for Henry to secure for France internal order and peace abroad. The nation's own energy did the rest.

CHAPTER VI

HENRY AND RELIGION

It is obvious that personal religion did not play a large part in Henry's life. At the same time—in an age which had witnessed the advance of the Counter-Reformation, and in which the great majority of men were willing and even anxious to lay down their lives for what they considered to be religious truth, it was impossible to ignore religious dogma. The religious question was one which it was imperative for Henry to solve. The yoke of the Church, or rather of the ecclesiastical nobility, lay heavily upon France. In England a widespread indifference to religious theory had enabled successive monarchs—Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth—to change the religion of their subjects as often as they pleased almost without opposition. In France no such indifference existed. Changes in religion were not marked by the sufferings of an occasional martyr, but by long wars between armed creeds. Rationalism was unknown. Montaigne, who died in 1592, was the first Frenchman to propound a theory of life which was not based on Christian theology; but his religious ideas for the time passed almost unheeded. It was permissible to attack individuals in the Church. Few were shocked by Rabelais' satire of the monk who "only slept at his ease during a sermon, or when he was saying his

prayers." No one, however, was allowed, and few save the Huguenots desired, to attack the Church itself. Such was the attitude of Henry himself who, after all, was a child of his age. He was opposed neither to religion nor to the Catholic Church; and he maintained steadily that an established Church was essential to the well-being of a State. He would have agreed with Machiavelli, though it is difficult to imagine him putting the thought into words, that "there is no surer prognostic of impending ruin in any state, than to see divine worship neglected or despised."

Henry differed from the majority of his contemporaries on two points. Neither difference would have seemed particularly laudable at the time, but they account sufficiently for his subsequent reputation for enlightenment. In the first place Henry desired to lessen the burden of ecclesiasticism in general by supporting the Huguenots to a limited extent in order to counteract the supremacy of Catholicism. Secondly, his policy and career were not, and never had been, dominated by religion. A certain amount of toleration was inevitable. As he had displayed such indifference about his own creed, he could not with decency show much bigotry about the creed of his subjects.

At the same time, after his conversion, Henry lived as a Catholic. He was desperately anxious that his change of religion should be considered genuine and permanent. In December, 1593, he lost his way while hunting, and did not arrive home until two o'clock in the morning. He slept by the fire, having first sent three leagues for a priest to celebrate mass. He caused a great impression by

refusing to eat anything until he came. His eagerness to show himself a Catholic led him at times to be most unjust to the Huguenots. This eagerness is the explanation of his attitude in the famous controversy between Henry's faithful friend, Duplessis-Mornay, and Du Perron, Bishop of Evreux.

In his book "*De l'institution . . . du Saint Sacrement de l'Eucharistie*," Duplessis-Mornay made a variety of quotations which the Bishop alleged to be false. Henry summoned a conference, not to decide points of doctrine, but to determine the authenticity of the Protestant quotations. The conference was opened at Fontainebleau on the 4th May, 1599. In the centre of the Salle de Conseil, which ran along one side of the Cour Ovale, was placed a porphyry table. There, at one o'clock, the members of the Council took their places. The King sat at one end, having on his right the Roman Catholic champion, on his left the Protestant leader. At the opposite end of the table sat the secretaries. Behind, and on either side of the King, were princes, great officers of State, archbishops, bishops and nobles. A copy of Duplessis-Mornay's work, printed at La Rochelle, was placed before the King. By the side of the incriminated book was set a list of sixty passages carefully selected from the five hundred impugned by Du Perron. The inquiry began with a further choice of nineteen passages from the shorter list, and on the authenticity of these the question turned. Duplessis-Mornay had not been told of this procedure, and it had been impossible for him in the time allowed to verify the whole five hundred. In fact, nine passages only had been examined, and in each case—so say the Catholic historians—had

the meaning of the quotations been falsified, when the Protestant leader fell ill. His sickness, said his enemies, was feigned. Be that as it may, the conference was not resumed, and Henry declared in favour of Du Perron.

Henry, it is clear, did little to support the Huguenots. Their Edict had been extorted largely by force, but it is to Henry's credit that he saw that it was enforced. The Catholics were anxious to show their loyalty to Henry, because they still feared what he might do for the Huguenots. Spiritually, Henry had little in common with his former allies. They were a dangerous minority. At the same time, he appreciated that the Huguenot danger was a useful make-weight to Catholic pride. Although Henry showed himself a supporter of the Roman Catholic church, he was no lover of Rome. He believed in a national church, and he therefore supported Gallican privileges. The bulk of his subjects was Catholic, and he therefore adopted Catholicism as the national religion. He was a national King, and he was resolved that the Church should be French and not Roman. Putting national needs before religion, he did not hesitate to ally himself almost exclusively with Protestant powers—England, the United Provinces and Lutheran Germany. If the hold of the established religion had been less strong in France, he might well have established a national church on the lines of Henry VIII of England. As it was, he contented himself with encouraging the Gallicanism in France. By so doing he was enabled to carry out the political object that was so dear to him—the overthrow of the House of Habsburg.

The way in which he tackled the religious problem throws much light on his character. His misunderstandings with the Huguenots were largely due to the refusal of their leaders (with the exception of Sully) to appreciate the necessity of proclaiming his orthodoxy to the world in order to safeguard his practice of toleration. The Huguenots as a whole were narrow, bigoted and uncompromising. It is estimated that they held some seven hundred and sixty parishes, and that they controlled at least two hundred fortified places. Within their own territory they were even more intolerant than the Catholics, and breaches of the peace in disputed areas were by no means infrequent. The Huguenots never forgot that it was their efforts which had won Henry his throne, and they only began to appreciate his administration when they had had a chance of comparing it with that of his successors. Many of Henry's most trusted advisers, such as Sully, Lesdiguières, Serres and Laffemas, were Protestants, but there was a world of difference between them and the single-minded citizens of La Rochelle.

It cannot be denied that Henry failed to show much gratitude to his old allies. At the same time it must be remembered that they did everything they could to make matters difficult for him, and especially to embroil him with the Pope, whose support was vital to Henry. They had almost decided to take up arms against him during the war with Spain to compel him to grant an edict which he dared not publish until he could count completely on the loyalty of the people to support his efforts to drive out the foreigners. When he had granted them the Edict of Nantes they at once

sought to consolidate their position by seeking fresh concessions, which Henry would not have been strong enough to enforce even if he had granted them. It is true that the Protestants could not trust to the law for protection. They were dependent on strong government, but it was folly on their part to direct their energies to weakening their protector's grip upon the country.

The annual synod of the Huguenots caused Henry much anxiety. This was a purely religious meeting, but the opinions expressed were carefully noted by Catholic mischief-makers. The Synod of Gap in October, 1603, was attended, contrary to the express provisions of the Edict of Nantes, by a large number of foreign ministers. This was particularly dangerous, as at that time Bouillon was suspected of trying to effect a coalition of Protestants of all nationalities. In addition the Pope was naturally incensed at being proclaimed Antichrist by what was supposed to be a lawful assembly of the subjects of the Most Christian King. In 1606 Henry refused to allow a synod to be held, and in the following March he told his representative at the synod of La Rochelle to tell the Huguenots that "the way to induce me to give them what they desire is to conform in all things with my wishes." To secure their good will he promised them 2,000 livres for the new Protestant College at La Rochelle. It was, however, unfortunate that only a few months before he had given a quarter of a million for the Jesuit college of La Flèche. In November, 1607, Henry was further alarmed by the discovery that the Huguenots were in direct communication with the English Puritans, and that they had made a violent attack on his ally, James I,

without his knowledge. The Synod of 1608 went off no better. It refused to hear a message from Sully, and treated him as if he were a Roman Catholic and therefore an enemy.

Even more turbulent were the political assemblies of the Huguenots which the King had allowed by the Edict of Nantes. The most famous of these was that which met at Châtellerault in July, 1605. The chief subject to be discussed was the places of surety which had been assigned to the Huguenots for a term of eight years from 1598. Sully very unwillingly undertook to act as the King's representative, and gave orders that no foreigners should be admitted, and that the time-honoured custom of abusing the Pope should be omitted. The Huguenots complained that the King had not fully kept his promise to pay for their garrisons in the towns in question. Sully replied that they would be much better off without them, whereupon the Protestants answered with perfect truth that they quite agreed if Henry was immortal, but that they must make themselves strong enough to combat a less well-intentioned King. After much discussion the Protestants were allowed to retain their towns for a further period of four years. Another political assembly was held the following year, but despite vigorous protests Henry intimated that it was to be the last of its kind. As a sop to the Huguenots, Henry allowed them to build a temple two leagues nearer Paris than had been allowed by the Edict, and accordingly one of their principal churches was moved from Ablon to Charenton, where it remained until 1685. Although the Huguenots grumbled, and although there was something in the

nature of a revolt in Poitou in 1608, Henry was on the whole successful in curbing their exuberance and preventing them from making contact with foreign Protestants. At the same time his relationship with them was anything but harmonious. He could not afford to be over generous.

Henry found the Catholics far less troublesome. Politics were always his first consideration and, provided the Church gave him its loyal support, he did not try to impose reform. Reform indeed was most desirable, but Henry was not the man to undertake the task. He could not incur the risk of antagonising the ecclesiastical potentates. Even Bishop Péréfixe, Henry's most ardent apologist, finds it difficult to justify his hero. "Our Henry," he says, "at the same time would have liked to take care for the reformation of the Church, which in truth was in great disorder, as well in temporal matters—its goods having been usurped during the wars by the Huguenots and wicked Catholics—as in spiritual, the greater part of both prelates and pastors being as ignorant as depraved ; but he could not yet apply suitable remedies. The necessity to which he was driven of recompensing those who had well served him " (and, it should be added, those whose loyalty he had to buy) "constrained him to tolerate abuses, and even to commit them, disposing of benefices as formerly Charles Martel had done ; for he gave them to unfit persons, to married men, to soldiers, to children, and even to women to compensate them for the loss of their husbands killed or ruined in his service." These appointments of unfit persons to the highest ecclesiastical dignities were undoubtedly scandalous. Very few bishops ever

visited their sees, very few abbots their abbeys. The clergy themselves realised that such a situation made it almost impossible for the Church effectively to fight Protestantism. At a General Assembly held in 1596 they begged the King to refrain from appointing notoriously unfit persons to ecclesiastical benefices.

Henry was full of promises. He said "that he would only appoint to bishoprics capable persons who could preach and who would discharge their duties, likewise he would make worthy provision for other benefits." Despite these protestations, Henry continued to make the most unsuitable appointments. To induce Sully to raise the money exacted by the parents of Henriette d'Entragues, he gave his Huguenot minister two abbeys. In 1604 he appointed one Charles de Lévis, a child of four, Bishop of Lodève. A year later he cynically wrote to his wife : "On All Saints' Day . . . Monsieur de Lodève will be my confessor. I imagine that I shall have my absolution pretty cheaply." On the death of Charles, Cardinal Lorraine, in 1607, he appointed his son by Henriette, then aged six, to the bishopric of Metz. The Pope refused to confirm the election, but made no difficulty in approving an annual pension of 10,000 crowns to be paid to him out of the revenues of the see. Further, he promised that the boy should have the bishopric at the next vacancy. Thus it happened that Henry de Verneuil became a bishop of the Catholic Church at the mature age of ten and a half.

The parochial clergy were no more spiritual than the bishops. They were invariably poor, and they were drawn from the lowest class. They mixed

with the peasantry on equal terms, and they could only be distinguished from their fellows, so it was said, by their greater drunkenness and immorality. Towards the end of the reign some signs of improvement were noticeable, but on the whole the Church in Henry's day was in such a state of disorder and spiritual degradation that it appeared a scandal to the nation. In his dealings with the Church Henry merely continued the policy of his predecessors. Like them he sought to show his orthodoxy by the establishment of several new religious orders. He also obtained Paul V's sanction for a new order of chivalry known as the Knights of St. Mary of Mount Carmel. The pay of this picked bodyguard—for such was its true function—was provided by a special ecclesiastical tax. Despite this apparent devotion, Henry refused to tolerate any increase of papal power in France. The general assembly of the clergy held at Paris in 1599 begged the King, among other things, to cause the decrees of the Council of Trent to be published in France. The articles concerning dogma had actually been received, but Henry, supported by the Parlement, resolutely refused to accept the articles concerning policy and discipline, because they were for the most part contrary to the liberties of the Gallican Church, and to what the King deemed to be his rights. It was partly in order to prove that, despite this persistent refusal, he was nevertheless a loyal son of the Church, that he consented to the return of the Jesuits towards the end of 1603.

That Order had been expelled from France for its presumed encouragement of the doctrine of tyrannicide. The Jesuits were further supposed to

be in league with Spain, and to be the servants of the Pope, with whom at the time of their expulsion Henry was on the worst of terms. Within a short time, however, he began to realise that most of his suspicions were unfounded, and prudence dictated that it was better to have the Order as a friend than as an enemy. It is a paradox that the Jesuits were driven out of France for their attachment to Spain, whilst in that country they were made the object of the most deadly assaults. The last Spanish General had died in 1573. Since then the Jesuits had been led for the most part by Italians. The majority of the Spanish clergy disliked their immunities and privileges. For them it had ceased to be a national order. Its place had been taken by the Dominicans, the deadly enemies of the Jesuits, who in Spain were often ill-treated. The Jesuit Order appealed to Clement VIII who was inclined to support them in Spain, and wholeheartedly undertook the task of persuading Henry to allow them to return to France.

Ever since his absolution Henry had been anxious to conciliate the Pope. He therefore listened with deference to Clement's argument that it was unjustifiable that an entire order should be condemned because Jean Chastel, a single irresponsible youth, might have been influenced by Jesuit teaching, and have deserved punishment. The Pope further pointed out that it was the Jesuits who had done most for the restoration of Catholicism, and now that Henry had been accepted as a good Catholic it was unseemly for him to continue his persecution.

Clement's efforts were greatly facilitated by the well-considered conduct of the Order itself. The

Jesuits carefully refrained from any display of hostility against the King of France. They were too experienced politicians to continue to support the obviously lost cause of the League. Eager to enlist the Pope's support they adopted his policy of friendship with France. No one did more to secure Henry's absolution than the Jesuit Toledo. Du Perron wrote to Villeroy : " I will only tell you that that Cardinal has done wonders, and has shown himself a good Frenchman." Despite the royal command a few Jesuits remained in France, and they began openly to exhort the people to be loyal and faithful to their persecutor.

Nevertheless the Parlements continually pressed Henry to pass new decrees against them. Henry did not respond readily. The Jesuits were dangerous enemies, but he promised that if the Parlements could secure him from their machinations their exile would last for ever. Their influence, however, was all pervading, and there were other political considerations which urged Henry to modify his attitude. He saw, as he says in one of his dispatches, that by the persecution of an Order, which counted so many members remarkable for talent and learning, which had so much power and so large a body of adherents, he would raise up enemies implacable to himself, and might give occasion to renewed conspiracies among the more rigid Catholics. He had been unable to expel all the Jesuits, and the influence of those who remained might well be used to stir up popular discontent. Moreover, he had made such important concessions to the Huguenots by the Edict of Nantes, that he owed some new guarantee to Catholicism. Father Lorenzo Maggio came

to France to prove to the King that he need no longer fear the Jesuit connection with Spain, and to assure him in the name of the General of the Order's true allegiance. The King thought it more advisable to make trial of its friendship than its enmity. Sully remarks that he saw he could use them for his own advantage against Spain.

Henry's action was not precipitate. As early as 1600, during the negotiations with Savoy, he declared himself ready to admit the Order again under certain conditions. Soon afterwards the Jesuit Cotton became his confessor, and finally in September, 1603, Henry published an edict by which the Jesuits were re-established in France, provided that all members serving there were natural-born Frenchmen, and had taken an oath of loyalty to the State. Henceforth their influence steadily increased, and it was noticeable that the number of attempts on Henry's life considerably diminished.

Such, then, was Henry's religious policy. He did what he could for his Huguenots, but he accepted Catholicism wholeheartedly. In truth he had no alternative. At the same time, he did nothing to encourage Papal pretensions. There was no Inquisition in France. He supported the current theory of a Gallican or national church, but only in so far as it might enhance the royal prerogatives. It would doubtless be absurd to call Henry a religious man; but in his age it was impossible not to be interested in religion. The justification of his somewhat varied career is that in the end he was able to give the majority of his people what they wanted. For a man with rigid, or even real, convictions that would have been impossible.

CHAPTER VII

HENRY, EUROPE AND THE "GRAND DESIGN"

I

THE period of Henry's undisputed rule was short, and it was almost entirely spent at peace with other powers in Europe. Nevertheless, during his reign the foundations of French foreign policy for nearly two centuries were irrevocably laid. There was, at first, little unanimity as to the policy which ought to be adopted. There was a sharp division in the Council, one faction being led by Villeroy and the other by Sully. The former, one of Henry's most experienced counsellors, urged Henry to ally himself with the House of Habsburg for the suppression of heresy. His arguments were warmly supported by Marie de' Medici. It is not surprising, however, that Henry inclined to the view taken by Sully. His aim, quite simply, was to increase the power and prestige of France, and to make her safe from invasion. The greater part of his life had been spent in countering the open or covert hostility of the House of Habsburg, and it was natural that he should give a ready ear to the advice of Sully, his old companion in arms and the bitter enemy of Spain and Austria. In Henry's day France was almost surrounded by territories ruled or controlled by a mighty House which regarded with dread every increase in the power of France. To the south lay Spain and the Spanish territories of Milan

and Naples which bordered on Savoy, for long under the influence of Philip II. To the east were three territories controlled by the Habsburgs—Franche Comté, Alsace and Luxemburg; while on the north France was bounded by the Spanish Netherlands. Henry was determined to build up the resources of France, so that one day this ring might be broken. The Spanish and the Austrian branches of the House of Habsburg were closely allied. They were inevitably opposed to France regaining her position as a first-class power.

The dominant characteristic of the politics of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries is the complete ascendancy of the Habsburgs. No single power could challenge them. Francis I had tried and failed. The subsequent decline in their strength was so rapid that it is easy to ante-date it. In Henry's day the strength of Spain and Austria was still most formidable. The Emperor Charles V, the common ancestor of both branches, had ruled nearly half the known world. He had abdicated in 1555. His successors in Germany had not been men of first-rate ability. Henry's contemporary, Rudolph II, spent most of his energy in astrological research and a vain quest for the Philosopher's Stone. At the same time, his influence was tremendous. He ruled over Austria, Bohemia, Hungary and a considerable part of Germany. Half insane though he was, his power was formidable even apart from his prestige as Holy Roman Emperor. Furthermore, he was closely allied by marriage and diplomacy to Philip III, who controlled, in addition to Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, much of Italy and the greater part of the New World.

The armies they commanded, though often unpaid, were the envy of the age. Despite their maladministration, the resources of the Habsburg seemed limitless. Much preparation, both in the collection of gold and materials of war and in the formation of diplomatic alliances, was essential before Henry could hope to challenge their supremacy.

In 1598 France found herself virtually without an ally. She had lost the sympathy of her old supporters, England and Holland, by making a separate peace with Spain in breach of her solemn undertaking. Financially she was bankrupt. She was torn by internal dissensions. Her people had forgotten the arts of peace, and were too exhausted to continue in the path of war. To make France a first-rate power Henry was compelled to start from the beginning. It has been shown how Henry tried by force of arms to teach Savoy that it was to her interest to ally herself with France; how he gained a foothold in Italy by his marriage with the Grand Duke of Tuscany's niece; and how he earned the gratitude of the Venetians by his intervention in their quarrel with the Pope. His relations with James I of England were not wholly satisfactory. Henry and Elizabeth had understood and respected each other. They had much in common. Both put their country above everything, and neither shrank from perfidy when it seemed advisable. James was more difficult to deal with: he had nothing of the realist in him, and Henry held him in the greatest contempt. It was he who first called James "the wisest fool in Christendom." The Venetian ambassador reported that he also referred to him as a double-faced man ("*un uomo di più facie*").

He despised him for his excessive interest in amusements. In 1605 James asked him to send over one Vitry "a famous sportsman." Henry did so, remarking caustically that he was "amazed that in such troublous times His Majesty of England should think of nothing but the chase." Nevertheless it was essential to establish good relations with England, although there were serious difficulties in the way. It was suspected that James was bent upon an alliance with Spain, but Henry also appreciated that he desired nothing less than to engage in a European war. It was also clear that James, in his inconsistent way, wished to retain the position of ally and defender of Protestantism which he had inherited from his predecessor. The most Henry could expect from him in the circumstances was an attitude of benevolent neutrality, and that hope, in the main, was achieved.

Although Henry sought to find allies wherever he could, his primary concern was, if possible, to break the lines of communication between Spain, Italy and the Netherlands. Here lay the importance of Savoy, which commanded some of the passes between Milan and the north. Here also lay the importance of the Swiss Cantons, in those days thirteen in number. If he could persuade the Swiss to adopt a hostile attitude towards Spain he might expect, with the help of Savoy, to close every pass from the Brenner to the Mont Cenis, and thus to cut off the Spaniards in Italy from their countrymen in Franche Comté and the Low Countries. The Swiss had, with Venice, been the first to acknowledge Henry as King of France, and in December, 1601 the alliance was renewed at Soleure, the

Cantons conceding free passage through their territories for Henry's troops and those of his allies. The treaty was satisfactory as far as it went, but Henry had yet to deal with the Grey League (or Grisons) and the Valtelline. These territories, which lay along the Adda northwards of Lake Como, did not at that time form part of the Helvetic Confederation. They were not represented at the conference at Soleure, and the Spaniards succeeded in persuading them to refuse free passage to Henry's allies. Their position was particularly vulnerable in that they were dependent on Milan for their supplies. In 1603 they sought to escape from their connection with Spain by entering into a close alliance with Venice. This step enraged Fuentes, the Spanish representative in Milan, who determined to punish them for re-opening to an independent state the gateway through the Alps, which he had considered to have been closed since France had abandoned her claim to Saluzzo at the beginning of the previous year. He accordingly diverted all traffic to the St. Gothard and built an impregnable fortress near the head of Lake Como to block the route into the Valtelline. The Grisons appealed to their allies—the Swiss Cantons, Venice and Henry IV. The Cantons bordering on the St. Gothard, which were naturally enjoying a larger share of trade by reason of Fuentes' action, persuaded the other Cantons to do nothing. Venice declined to be drawn into war, and Henry likewise refused as yet to challenge the might of the Habsburgs. Until the last months of his life he was immensely cautious. He increased his prestige by diplomacy and not by war. The Grisons were for the time left to fend for themselves.

Henry adopted the same cautious policy towards the Dutch. He provided money for them to continue their struggle against Spain. In 1606, when their energy seemed to be flagging, he inspired them to further efforts by suggesting that he himself should assume the sovereignty of the Netherlands. The offer was gracefully refused, or rather the Dutch made Henry realise that it could not be accepted without a great measure of undesirable publicity. When the Twelve Years' Truce came, Henry made much diplomatic capital out of his successful mediation. He had attained his principal object by forcing Spain to waste her financial and military resources in an unsuccessful war, at a time when France was enjoying a period of peace and prosperity, and was taking the opportunity of amassing vast supplies for the inevitable conflict.

Henry's relations with Protestant Germany were much less satisfactory. Even since 1599 he had urged the Protestant states to unite against Catholic aggression, but his desire to become leader of Protestant Germany had been weakened by Bouillon's machinations and by his suspicion that the German Princes were in direct communication with the ill-affected Huguenots. After the capture of Sedan Henry's policy in Germany became more forceful. Thus he wrote to Maurice, the young Landgrave of Hesse : " God having been pleased . . . to establish peace and concord in my realm, my chief end and thought will henceforth be to be useful to my allies and my friends and the cause which we have in common." He was referring to the liberties of Germany and the abasement of the Habsburgs.

Yet the House of Austria was in fact no oppressor ;

it was in no position even to defend itself. Rudolf was practically insane and his territories were in a state of disintegration. In Bohemia the Calvinists were virtually supreme. A civil war was being fought in Hungary. The Empire was being menaced by the Turks, with whom, as has been seen, Henry had a friendly understanding. At this juncture the Emperor's brothers and cousins met at Vienna. They declared the unfortunate Rudolph incapable of governing and recognised his brother Matthias as *caput ac columen* of the House of Austria.

Matthias may have been saner than his brother, but he was hardly more competent. It was natural that foreign powers should begin to consider the possibility of breaking with age-old tradition and of electing someone other than a Habsburg to be Holy Roman Emperor. Philip III naturally thought that no more suitable candidate than himself could be found. Henry, realising that he had no chance himself, tried to use the usual pretext of safeguarding German "liberties" to induce the Catholic Maximilian of Bavaria to put forward his claims. The attempt, however, was unsuccessful, as Maximilian had no desire to split the Catholic vote. Nevertheless, Henry urged a closer alliance between the Princes, not so much, as he said, against the Emperor or for the sake of religion in itself, but in order to counter the threat of Spanish intervention. The Protestants, however, were jealous and reluctant. It required the outrageous occupation of the Imperial city of Donauwörth by the Bavarians at the command of the Emperor in December, 1607, to induce them to form the alliance known as the Evangelical Union. In May, 1608, the Elector Palatine, the leader of the

Calvinist party, the Margraves of Anspach and Baden-Dürlach, Count Wolfgang William of Neuburg and the Duke of Würtemberg signed a pact for mutual assistance for a period of ten years. It seemed at last as if Henry's policy had been crowned with success.

Unfortunately the Evangelical Union did not mark a complete unification of Protestant Germany. It is important as one of the few alliances in which the Lutherans, whose status had been recognised by the religious peace of Augsburg in 1555, consented to work with the Calvinists, who had obtained no such recognition. The Union derived no support from the Elector of Saxony, and at first no more than sympathy and pious hopes from the Elector of Brandenburg. Moreover, contrary to Henry's expectations, it did not turn wholeheartedly to him for support. The Duke of Würtemberg did not even give him a full account of what had happened at the formation of the Union, and, as if to show Henry that the League had other patrons, he sent the same dispatch to London as he did to Paris.

The creation of the Evangelical Union was answered by the formation of a far more formidable Catholic League in July, 1609. Maximilian of Bavaria was appointed Colonel of the League, and Spain promised a subsidy on the condition that the objects of the League were approved by the Emperor. Thus by the year 1609 there were two opposed and armed organisations within the Empire, both illegal and both counting on foreign help. Both sides were awaiting the spark that would start the conflagration. Neither side was fully prepared, because neither could count on the full support of all its co-religionists. Had Henry not been assassinated the struggle between

the two religions known to history as the Thirty Years War would have started in 1610 and not in 1618, and it would have been France's lot to have struck the first blow.

For years past France had been rearming. Her army had ceased to be predominantly mercenary and had become national. Her system of communications had been vastly improved ; her frontier towns had been fortified. Sully had collected a formidable array of cannon in the Arsenal and had amassed an enormous quantity of gold (though considerably less than he asserts in his memoirs) in the vaults of the Bastille. To pay for all this, increased taxation was necessary. Already in 1607 Sully confessed that the people were "so burdened with *taille* and other impositions that they could scarcely pay." As the military preparations were hurried on, the signs of discontent was alarming. If the peasantry was to be able to continue to bear its crushing burdens a further period of peace was essential. With his intimate knowledge of his people, Henry must have appreciated that fact. By the summer of 1609 Henry was beginning to realise that it would be wiser to avoid war if possible. Despite the crisis in Germany, his natural caution still asserted itself.

II

It is fairly clear that earlier in the same year (1609) Henry meant to make use of the opportunity occasioned by the disputed succession to the duchies of Cleves and Jülich. On 25th March, 1609, the last Duke died without issue. The right of succession was claimed by at least five pretenders, but the claims

of the Elector of Brandenburg and the Court Palatine of Neuburg had most justification. The Elector was the eldest by descent, while the Count was the nearest of kin. The matter ought doubtless to have been decided by the Imperial courts, had it not been complicated by strategic and religious considerations. The Duke's dominions were wealthy lands lying along the course of the lower Rhine and adjoining the United Provinces, the Spanish Netherlands, the bishopric of Münster and the archbishopric of Cologne. The population was Catholic, but both of the principal claimants were Protestants, and as rulers in Germany since 1555 had had the right to prescribe the religion of their subjects, it seemed likely that the territory might be lost to Catholicism, and Habsburg communications with the Netherlands seriously impeded. It was incumbent on the Emperor in any event to intervene on behalf of the Catholics.

The dispute provided Henry with a long awaited opportunity, not necessarily, as many historians seem to think, to embark on an immediate war with the Habsburgs, but to strengthen his hold on Protestant Germany with a view to such a war in the future. Henry could strike when he liked, and his experience had taught him not to attack until he was ready. He speeded up his military preparations, but this was chiefly to give added weight to the arguments he addressed to the Imperial Archdukes, and to persuade the hesitant John Sigismund of Brandenburg to adopt a policy more definitely hostile to the Emperor. Henry was not going to risk a war unless he could rely on a full measure of support from Berlin.

The Elector of Brandenburg and the Count of Neuburg, by mutual consent, had established a

provisional government in Cleves and Jülich, but in July, 1609, the Emperor pronounced the disputed territories "sequestered," and demanded that the claimants should submit their titles to him for judgment. Meanwhile the Archduke Leopold occupied Jülich on his behalf. Henry was loud in his protests. He told the Imperial representatives that he intended to support the provisional government against Leopold. He wrote to his agent, Bongars, who was at Berlin, that "if need be he would put on foot a powerful army which he would lead himself." Nevertheless he did not intend to embark on a war if timid counsels prevailed at Berlin. He told the provisional administrators not to provoke Leopold until a plan of campaign had been worked out.

Henry's caution was justified, for the German princes thoroughly distrusted him. They disliked the idea of foreign intervention, as they knew that Henry would demand his price. When he offered them soldiers they asked him for money. At the end of 1609 the Elector joined the Evangelical Union, but, unfortunately for Henry, the Union refused to admit that the Cleves-Jülich question was one in which its members had a common interest. Furthermore the Elector of Saxony, Protestant though he was, was slowly moving towards the Emperor.

Despite the unsatisfactory state of affairs in Germany, Henry continued his diplomatic preparations, and in particular he did what he could to strengthen his alliance with Savoy. Charles Emanuel was so delighted with the idea of invading the Milanese with French support that in October, 1609, Henry felt it advisable to instruct his ambassador to temper the Duke's ardour. He wrote to him: "As for the

time at which these enterprises are to be undertaken, that is something which cannot be prescribed," for the war in Italy depended on the attitude of the Germans and the English towards a war for Cleves-Jülich.

At the end of November, 1609, Henry was certainly not committed to war. In October he had told Lesdiguières that there was still a possibility that he might marry his second daughter, Christine, to Philip III's son. He was repeatedly urging Savoy to moderate his zeal. He wrote to Rome in most pacific terms. It is sufficiently clear that he did not intend to fight until Spain or the Emperor took up arms or until the German Princes showed themselves more united and anxious for his support. During the next four months the situation hardly altered, yet by that time Henry had committed himself to immediate war. His resources were no greater and his allies no more reliable. What was the reason for this sudden change from caution to haste?

III

Towards the end of the year 1608 the Constable Montmorency-Damville brought his daughter Charlotte to court. She was sixteen years old, and her fresh beauty won all hearts, particularly that of Bassompierre, a native of Lorraine, then aged twenty-nine. Long afterwards he asserted that "at that time there was no one under heaven with more beauty, or more charm nor more perfection." The Constable approved his suit and the marriage was fixed for the end of January, 1609. On the 16th of that month the King attended a ballet in which Charlotte figured as one of the nymphs. Mezeray, the seventeenth-century historian, relates that "in this ballet she was

dressed as Diana and held a dart in her hand ; but she inspired in the King sentiments quite alien to those which that chaste goddess ought to inspire." Though suffering acutely from gout, Henry fell wildly and disastrously in love.

He sent for Bassompierre, for whom he had the liveliest affection, and proposed that he should surrender Charlotte to him. The scene is reminiscent of the interview between Henry and his friend Bellegarde, the lover of Gabrielle d'Estrées. He told Bassompierre : " I have not only fallen in love with Mademoiselle de Montmorency—I am completely obsessed by her. If she marries you and she loves you, I shall hate you ; if she loves me, you will hate me. It would be better if this did not spoil our good understanding ; for I have a lively affection for you. . . . I have decided to marry her to my nephew the Prince of Condé and to keep her close to my family. She will be the consolation and support of my old age on which I am now entering. I will give my nephew, who is young and loves hunting a thousand times better than women, a hundred thousand livres a year with which to amuse himself." Bassompierre may have sighed like a lover, but he certainly obeyed like a good subject. The King suggested that he should marry Mademoiselle d'Aumale, and promised to make him a Duke. He was satisfied. Henry had overcome the first obstacle, but unfortunately he had misjudged Condé.

The necessary arrangements for the marriage between Condé and Charlotte were soon made, the marriage contract being signed at the Louvre on the 2nd March, 1609. Condé seemed as indifferent as had been anticipated, but Charlotte was not altogether

pleased. Condé was not nearly as good-looking as Bassompierre and had none of the graces of a lover. She was flattered by the King's attentions, but he seemed to her far too old to be considered seriously. She regarded the affair with him as a game in which the aged King played the part of a rustic shepherd wooing a beauteous nymph. Henry's attentions grew more pressing. Although he was famed for his simplicity of dress, it is recorded that he received her on the 10th March, 1606, dressed in perfumed ruffs and a magnificent doublet with sleeves of Chinese satin. Some time afterwards, at a hunt at Chantilly, she saw the King disguised as an aged lackey, with a plaster over one eye and holding a pair of hounds on a leash. He was standing with the crowd in the courtyard, and when he saw her he kissed his hand to her and pressed the other to his heart. Condé was not amused. His tastes might be simple but he was not going to share his future wife with anyone.

The marriage was solemnised on the 17th May. Henry's attentions to Charlotte increased apace. There were many who delighted in pointing them out to the young Prince. Madame de Verneuil, who realised that Charlotte had completely ousted her in the King's affections, took care to inform Condé of the arrangement between Henry and Bassompierre. Marie de' Medici told him bluntly not to be a cuckold. Henry knew no moderation or decency. On one occasion he went to Chantilly accompanied by only two or three friends, disguised as Flemish nobles and wearing false beards. They were recognised, and on Condé's instructions admission was refused. In the turmoil that ensued, the King and his companions were nearly arrested as disturbers of the peace.

Undeterred by this misfortune, Henry, once more disguised, attended a party at which Charlotte was present. This time he was recognised by her mother, but, despite vows of secrecy, Condé somehow came to know of the affair. Soon after, in July, 1609, he withdrew to his château of Valéry in Picardy. Henry at once ordered him to return and threatened to have his marriage annulled. The Queen and Condé were equally alarmed at the threat. Marie began to demand to have her position secured by a formal coronation. After some months of defiance, Condé resolved to flee the country.

Starting at five o'clock in the morning of the 29th November, 1609, he and his wife reached Landrecies in the Spanish Netherlands that evening, and Brussels the following day. There they put themselves under the protection of the Archduke and the Infanta his wife who, under the suzerainty of Spain, were the rulers of the Netherlands.

Henry heard the news of their flight the same day, while at cards. He was beside himself with fury and at once left the table. He sent for Sillery, Jeannin and Villeroy and later for Sully. When Sully arrived he found Henry pacing up and down the Queen's bedroom at three o'clock in the morning. Marie was in bed. Her last child, Henrietta Maria, who was to marry Charles I of England, was less than a week old. The King turned to Sully. "The Prince has gone and has taken his wife with him," he said. "Well, Sire," returned Sully, ready as usual with his reply, "if you had followed my advice and locked him up in the Bastille, you would know where to find him." "The thing is done," retorted Henry, "there is no point in talking like that."

After some hesitation Sully told him that he ought to do nothing about the matter. "If you do nothing at all and appear completely indifferent, no one will think anything of the Prince, or help him, and in three months he will be compelled to sue for terms. But if you show yourself anxious and eager to get him back, he will be much thought of and assisted with money. Many will be ready to support him to spite you, who, if you disregard him, will take no notice of him."

Needless to relate that Henry was in no mood to accept Sully's cautious advice. Messengers were at once sent to try to intercept the fugitives before they crossed the frontier. Praslin, the Captain of the Guard, was then sent to Brussels to denounce Condé as a traitor and an enemy and to ask the Archduke to permit his arrest.

The Archduke's position was not easy. He did not want to offend Henry and did his utmost to effect a reconciliation. At the same time he could not with decency surrender to the King of France a prince of the blood who craved his protection against the would-be seducer of his wife. There were many at his court who urged Albert to adopt a firm attitude against Henry. Spinola, a Genoese, then the greatest general in the service of Spain, was anxious for war, and pointed out that nothing was so valuable to Spain as the presence of Condé in her territories. The influence of his family amongst the Huguenots was enormous. He might even be used as a possible candidate for the French throne. Spinola, in addition, was by no means unaware of the personal charms of the Princess, and went so far as to urge upon her slow-witted husband the advantage he might derive from disputing the validity of Henry's second marriage.

Encouraged by Spinola, Condé left his wife in Brussels on the 21st February, 1610, and set out for Milan, where he was royally entertained by Fuentes, who had none of the Archduke's scruples about offending Henry. Condé's departure did not make matters easier for the Archduke. Alarming though the intimacy between Condé and his enemies might be, it was the Princess and not the Prince that Henry wanted. A few days before Condé's departure Henry had made an attempt to kidnap Charlotte. Unfortunately for him, Henry's excitement was too obvious and the plot had been foiled. He set out from Paris with four carriages and a great retinue, only to be met by a messenger who announced the disaster. Maddened by this reverse, the aged King renewed his efforts. He made Charlotte's father, the Constable, write to Brussels demanding her instant return. The Archduke replied that he could do nothing without the authority of her husband.

Meanwhile Charlotte herself was not enjoying her exile. She disliked the formality of the Spaniards. Her ladies had been won over by the King, Madame de Berny, the wife of the French ambassador, was particularly prominent in extolling his virtues. Henry was constantly sending presents and letters. He wrote a famous letter to one of his agents in which he said : " I am writing to my beautiful angel . . . I am so shrunk with my worries that I am nothing but skin and bone. Everything disgusts me. I fly society and if, for politeness' sake, I allow myself to be led into any company, my wretchedness is completed." Charlotte was not displeased. She called him " her heart " and begged her " Knight-errant " to deliver her from captivity. Henry vowed that he would.

IV

The change in Henry's attitude since the flight is so remarkable that it is almost impossible to say that had Charlotte remained in France Henry would have been committed to war in May, 1610. Four months before the flight Villeroy's son-in-law wrote to the French Ambassador in London that Henry was determined to give his "moral support" to Brandenburg and Neuburg, but that he had no intention of breaking the peace with Spain. Six months later, in January, 1610, he wrote to the same man that, if the Spaniards continued their support of Condé, "the King was resolved not to tolerate such an affront." The remarks of Henry's most trusted advisers were equally definite. President Jeannin told the Archduke's ambassador that "the peace of Europe rests in your master's hands. Peace and war depend on whether the Princess is or is not surrendered. Everything else is immaterial." On the 19th April, 1610, Villeroy spoke to the same effect: "It is a matter of passion, and if the business of the Princess can be arranged there will be a means of quieting and appeasing everything else . . . but if the Princess remains where she is, we are on the eve of an explosion which will set fire to the four corners of Christendom." Some of these statements may have been made to intimidate the peace-loving Archduke, but there is other evidence which shows the complete change in Henry's outlook. At the beginning of 1609 Henry was of opinion that seven or eight thousand men would be sufficient if he decided to intervene in the Cleves affair. In April, 1610, he told the

nuncio that the conduct of the Archduke and the King of Spain compelled him to collect an army of more than 30,000. In the same month he had a conference with the Spanish ambassador, who anxiously inquired the purpose of his armaments, which were obviously far more extensive than was warranted by their avowed object, namely, the expulsion of the Archduke Leopold from Cleves-Jülich. Henry replied with a diatribe against Philip III and his kinsmen who were sheltering the rebel Condé. The ambassador then asked the direct question : was it against his master that so vast an army was assembled ? " I arm myself and my country," replied the King, " to protect myself, and I have taken my sword in my hand to strike those who shall give me cause." " What then shall I tell my master ? " " You can tell him whatever you please."

Henry hurried forward his preparations. The army was certainly increased three-fold. He made desperate efforts to cement his alliances, but his failure was marked. The Catholic princes mocked at his pretensions of devotion to the "sacred liberties" of Germany. The Catholic League was said to be negotiating for a closer alliance with Spain and the Pope. As yet they had not been wholly successful, for Henry had managed to persuade Paul V that the Emperor was using the religious conflict merely as a cloak for schemes of Habsburg aggrandisement. Henry's relations with the Evangelical Union grew even more unsatisfactory. At a conference held at Swäbisch-Hall in February, 1610, the French representative did not dare to mention the two subjects which interested his master most, namely the exclusion of the Habsburgs from the Imperial throne and the

proposed conquest of the Spanish Netherlands. The Union grudgingly agreed to co-operate with Henry in an effort to settle the question of the succession in Cleves and Jülich, but it refused to bind itself not to make a separate peace with the Emperor. A month later the Princes indignantly refused the suggestion that they should undertake to give Henry their assistance in the event of a Huguenot revolt in France. They declared that "they preferred to let the Cleves affair go by rather than give such an assurance."

Henry turned to England, but James I, despite his declarations of sympathy with the German Protestants, refused to sign a treaty of mutual assistance with the King of France. James knew all about Charlotte and caustically remarked that "it was not love but villainy to wish to debauch another man's wife." The Dutch were scarcely more satisfactory, for they were weary of war. They promised to provide some troops. At the same time they definitely refused to attack the Spanish Netherlands. The Venetians also declined to contemplate war against the Emperor. They had nothing to gain and everything to lose.

Savoy was the only ally on which Henry could rely, but Charles Emanuel fully appreciated that he could make use of Henry's necessities to exact his own terms. The alliance had been sealed in November, 1609, by a provisional agreement for the marriage of Henry's daughter and Charles Emanuel's heir, Victor Amadeus. The terms of the alliance, however, had yet to be fixed. In October the Duke had been prepared to hand over Savoy to France, provided he was adequately compensated on the Italian side

of the Alps. In April, 1610, however, he was able to demand a far higher price for his alliance. By the Treaty of Brusol, signed on the 25th April, 1610, Henry undertook to furnish the Duke with 14,000 men and the Duke promised forthwith to attack Milan, but he exacted an undertaking that all conquests should be his. France promised much, but she was to have nothing in return. No one appreciated the strength of passion better than Charles Emanucl of Savoy.

At home the position was, to say the least, menacing. Sully's budget for 1610, optimistically inaccurate though it was, showed a large deficit. Work on the roads was for the most part suspended. Interest on the debt was further reduced. Many additional taxes were imposed. There was a project to debase the coinage, which was resolutely opposed by the usually submissive Parlement. As early as September, 1609, the King sent a message ordering the Parlement to sit until all his edicts had been verified without qualification. The Parlement replied that so many of its members had already gone home that there were not enough left to deliberate. There was a strong rumour that the Huguenots were plotting a general massacre of the Catholics. Henry did not feel himself strong enough to inquire into the matter. Instead he tried to placate the Protestants by putting their leaders—La Force, Créqui and Rohan—at the head of his armies. More dangerous still was the disaffection among the Catholics owing to their belief that Henry was about to embark on a war to destroy Catholicism in Europe.

Such was the position in the spring of 1610. Villeroy and Jeannin, men of vast experience, were seriously

perturbed and thought that disaster was imminent. Only Sully, ever a violent enemy of the Habsburgs, urged Henry on. France had no reliable allies. The internal situation was menacing. The country had enjoyed barely nine years' peace, and despite careful administration, it had not fully recovered its strength. Powerful though the French armies were, the Habsburg infantry was still supreme. Spanish and Austrian resources were infinite, and the Emperor could count on the support of the greater part of Germany. Even Henry was alarmed ; he slept badly and could eat little. Yet it was not impossible for him to avoid a general war. Philip and Matthias had enough troubles of their own. The Archduke Albert was genuinely peace-loving. In an effort to avoid a general war he even gave permission for French troops to pass through Luxemburg on their way to Jülich. Henry, however, had flung his habitual caution to the winds. He could see nothing but the fair face of Charlotte de Montmorency. Richelieu was not mistaken when he said that "in his last days Henry IV bandaged his eyes to the truth." In all probability France was only saved from disaster by the assassination of the man she regards as her greatest King.

V

Henry's foreign policy is worthy of close attention if only because the famous "Grand Design" for the reorganisation of Europe has for so long been attributed to him. Until the last months of his life his policy was cunning rather than aggressive, cautious rather than precipitate. Whatever the reason for his sudden change in attitude, whether it was occasioned

by a belief in the necessity for the immediate abasement of the House of Habsburg or by the fear of the connection between Condé and Spain, or by blind passion, it is not fair to pass a judgment upon him based merely on his conduct in his last days. His policy was on the whole remarkably successful. His support was eagerly sought and his advice respected. Without recourse to war he succeeded in accelerating the decline in Habsburg power, which had already begun, but the full effects of which were not yet apparent.

French hostility to the House of Habsburg was indeed inevitable. Philip II had during the civil wars, almost succeeded in absorbing France, even as he had secured the incorporation of Portugal in Spain. Since Henry's accession to power Spain had not ceased to ferment discontent within his kingdom and to afford support to his enemies abroad. Henry soon discarded the idea of countering the influence of the Habsburgs by marriage alliances, and he determined to make France ready to challenge their supremacy by force of arms. It is only because Henry was thus in fact consistently hostile to Spain and Austria that it is in any degree possible to attribute the "Grand Design" to Henry IV.

The sixteenth century witnessed the final breakdown of the medieval idea of a united Christendom. The concept of national sovereignty began to take its place. As a result it seemed that the different nations as between themselves were living in what Hobbes called a state of nature. Direct and violent methods were encouraged and no device was more popular than tyrannicide. Every crime found its apologists: Mariana's justification of the doctrine in his *De*

Rege et Regis Institutione, published in 1599, was received with acclamation. It was small wonder that thinkers should react from the state of lawlessness in which they lived and should try to find order, no longer in the idea of a united Christendom, but in the new concept of a family of nations, each wholly independent yet bound together by a common recognition of some system of law. The greatest of such political theorists was Hugo Grotius, whose work, *De Jure Belli et Pacis*, was published in 1625, though much of it had been written by 1604. Like Bodin, he believed in national sovereignty. States, he asserted, were completely independent of one another and no obedience could be claimed by any authority superior to the King, such as the Pope or the Emperor. Furthermore, for the purposes of law and diplomacy, all states were equal, provided they were fitted by the standard of their civilisation and the order of their government for admission into the family of nations. Two years before Grotius' book was published Emeric Crucé had written on similar lines. His ideas were rather more practical and less legalistic. His plan for a league of nations included not only the Kings of France and Spain, but also the Pope, the Emperor and even the Ottoman Sultan. The inclusion of the infidel was a marked change from what had gone before, but it did not commend itself to the conservative mind of Sully, the true author of Henry IV's "Grand Design."

Sully may have borrowed some of his ideas from Grotius and Crucé, but the conception of a federation of Europe was very prevalent at the time. The various schemes have a remarkable amount in common. Sully's was not the most advanced, but it was probably

the most detailed. It is certainly far the most famous, and this is due to the fact that it was attributed to Henry of Navarre, whose posthumous reputation assured its popularity. Henry may or may not have known what was passing in Sully's mind, but there can be no doubt that for two centuries his fame was vastly increased by the literary efforts of his faithful servant, who of course attributed the whole scheme to his master.

The scattered references in the memoirs of Sully reveal the scheme to have been, broadly speaking, on these lines : from 1598 Henry was supposed to have conceived the idea of building up a series of foreign alliances, with the aim of destroying Habsburg power in Europe. Such a supposition indeed is not substantially at variance with the facts. Sully, however, goes on to say that Henry intended to expel the Spaniards from Italy and the Netherlands. Bohemia and Hungary were to recover their independence, while the Habsburgs should cease to hold the Empire. Incredible though it seems, the Austrians were to be compensated for their losses by grants of land in the New World. The first step was to confine the power of Philip III to Spain. For this purpose France, which, it seems, was to receive no territorial gains but only glory and honour, would be assisted by her natural allies—the Venetians, the Dutch and the Swiss. If need be the Scandinavian countries and the German princes might later be called upon for support.

When this object had been achieved the " Christian republic " was to be set up, divided into fifteen free and equal states. There were to be six elective monarchies—Rome, (including Naples) ruled over by

the Pope; the Empire from which the claims of heredity were to be rigorously excluded because no family would be allowed to provide more than one Emperor, Venice, Poland, Hungary and Bohemia. There were to be six hereditary monarchies—France, Spain, England, Sweden, Denmark and Lombardy, consisting of Savoy and the Milanese. Finally there were to be three federal republics—the Italian (comprising Genoa, Florence, Modena, Parma, Lucca and Piacenza), the Helvetic (composed of the Swiss cantons, the Tyrol, Franche Comté and Alsace), and the Belgic (made up of Flanders and the United Provinces). It is noteworthy that Russia was excluded. Sully gives his reason, namely, that "it was six hundred leagues in length and four hundred in breadth, being in great part idolators and in part schismatics such as Greeks and Armenians." In fact, neither Russia nor Turkey was suitable for inclusion in Sully's neatly worked-out schemes. They were therefore excluded.

Sully found a simple solution for the religious question. Three religions—Catholicism, Lutheranism and Calvinism—were to be admitted. As far as possible the *status quo* should be continued, but the princes were given the right to expel dissenters. The policy of the various states was to be regulated by six local councils, composed of representatives of the various groups of neighbouring states. Above these was to be a supreme council, meeting in some city in central Europe, which would decide questions of common interest. The greater states were to be represented by four delegates, the lesser by two. The council was to sit permanently and its members were to be elected for three years. Its chief function was

to direct the composite army to which every state had to contribute its quota, and which in the end was to be the only armed force in Europe. Sully has minutely worked out the contributions that each state, according to its capacity, would be called upon to make. Thus the Empire had to contribute three times as many infantry as any other state, but only half as many cavalry as France, Spain or England. Venice had to provide twenty-five galleys: the Italian Republic only eight. For some reason Bohemia had to provide twenty cannon, while the Emperor was excused with five. In all, there were to be 270,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry and 200 cannon.

The object of this army was first of all to act as an international police force. Thus there would be little danger of disobedience to the supreme council for, as Sully puts it, "none of the fifteen powers could attempt to get the better of another without attracting the attacks of the other fourteen." In the second place, Sully asserts that Henry intended that this army should be used to drive the infidels out of Europe. In real life Henry was on the best of terms with the Sultan, whom he constantly urged to attack the Emperor. In 1602 he flatly refused to join the Emperor in a war against the Turks, but when speaking of the "Grand Design" we deal with fiction and not with fact.

The idea underlying the amazing scheme known as the "Grand Design" was two-fold. The first motive was the desire that no nation should be strong enough to endanger any other. This at the time necessarily involved the destruction of Habsburg power in Central Europe, and the overthrow of the Spanish Empire. The idea was adopted by

Richelieu, and is the essence of the theory of the balance of power. The second motive was to avoid jealousy and internecine wars by a new division of European territories. These two projects may well have appealed to Henry. It is obvious that the details of the plan were not worked out until long after his death, but it is conceivable that he did, in fact, discuss some scheme for a re-settlement of Europe with his trusted minister. If such propositions as Sully put forward could induce the chief powers to take part in the humiliation of Austria, Henry's end was served. It is, moreover, certain that Henry and Elizabeth approved the idea of a Protestant union in which Lutherans and Calvinists should be on equal terms. The existence of the idea of a general league in which all enemies of the Habsburgs could join, derives some small support from an article in the treaty by which the United Provinces joined the existing alliance between England and France in October, 1596. The second article of that treaty provided "that within the year 1597 there shall be a general congress assembled and held by the deputies of the different confederates and the other Kings, princes, lords and states who shall join in the aforesaid league at such day time and place as the said King of France and the said lady the Queen of England shall think convenient." Needless to relate, no such congress ever met.

Modern historians, however, are at one in declaring that the "Grand Design" was no more than a figment of Sully's imagination. The ideas which he imputes to Henry are overwhelmingly improbable. All his life Henry had been an opportunist. He never for one moment could concentrate on the

future. It is inconceivable that he could ever have been interested in a plan which would take years—if not generations—to perfect. He was a practical man, and to him political theory made no appeal. Furthermore, his own actions consistently gave the lie to the "Grand Design." One of the axioms of the scheme was that each state—even Spain—should be supreme and unmolested within its own borders, yet Henry did not shrink from turning the sufferings of Spanish Moriscos to his own advantage. Though he considered it too dangerous personally to intervene on behalf of these converted descendants of the Moors, he incited them by every means to take up arms against their oppressors. It is equally obvious that Henry had no desire to create a Kingdom of Lombardy, for he did his utmost to induce Charles Emanuel to surrender Savoy to France, should sufficient conquests be made in Italy. Another fundamental principle of the "Grand Design" was that the Turks should be expelled from Europe. Yet in 1603 the French ambassador, on Henry's instructions, persuaded Sultan Achmet to make peace with Persia, and to turn his arms against Hungary and the Empire. The capture of Pesth by the Turks was thus to some extent the consequence of the diplomacy of the Most Christian King, the supposed author of the "Grand Design."

Sully was a man of vast imagination. A firm Calvinist, he belonged to a party which, to compensate for its own weakness and insecurity, persistently lived in a world of make-belief where astounding revolutions and dynastic changes, wars and amazing conquests would be part of everyday life. Sully's mathematical mind had ample oppor-

tunity to work out the most minute details during his prolonged and enforced retirement. For twenty-eight years after the death of his master Sully lived on without power or influence. He spent his time dreaming of the days that had gone. He gave his secretaries instructions to write his memoirs—the famous *Œconomies Royales*. Interspersed throughout the text are references to the great scheme. As his ideas developed he took pains to fit what he alleged to be the facts to his theories. Long conversations between the King and his minister are inserted, most of them obvious apocryphal. Documents are fabricated, especially correspondence between Henry and Elizabeth. The account of the relations between Paris and London is totally unreliable. A mission to England in 1601, which is described in great detail, has been shown to be entirely fictitious. Yet the "Grand Design" is so cunningly woven into the general story that it deceived generations of readers. Bishop Péréfixe, whose *Vie du Roy Henry IV* was published in 1661, somewhat naturally felt he must treat it as authentic. He bemoans the fact that "the trouble and displeasure of domestic vexations certainly retarded the execution of the great design which he had formed for the good and perpetual repose of Christendom and for the destruction of the Ottoman power." He then proceeds to give long extracts from Sully's memoirs, adding that Sully "certainly must know something about it, being, as he was, so great a confidant of the King." It is largely for that reason that in an uncritical age the "Grand Design" gained so much credence. In reality it was entirely the work of Sully. During his long retirement he saw the beginning, and could

have foreseen the end of Richelieu's career. Living a life of enforced leisure, he witnessed the success of a policy directed against the House of Austria. He must have at first thought, and later have come to believe, that if Henry IV had lived he would have done as well, if not better. He, therefore, devoted all his energies to convincing posterity that this was the fact.

Much of the legend of Henry IV centres round the "Grand Design." It was universally attributed to him, and formed the starting point for many subsequent schemes for perpetual peace. In 1719 Charles-Irénée Castel, abbé de St. Pierre, published his "Project of Perpetual Peace." In that book the author cleverly identifies his own plan with that of Henry IV. That he should have considered it worth while to do so provides fresh evidence of the amazing posthumous reputation of Henry of Navarre. Fresh life was given to the "Grand Design" through the work of an eighteenth-century editor of the *Œconomies Royales*, who collected all the scattered references to the project, and printed them as a composite chapter. This edition of the Abbé de l'Ecluse was remarkably popular, and was translated into English. For the first time, readers could study the "Grand Design" in a convenient form. It had an immense influence on political theorists, including Rousseau, Kant and Bentham.

So great is the reputation of Sully's project, and so well does it reflect the best contemporary thought that its merits are worthy of consideration quite apart from all questions of authenticity. It is the classic proposal for an international commonwealth. No writer on the League of Nations disregards it.

At the same time, the basic idea was that of a federal Europe, in which each State was supreme within its own territories, yet obedient to the commands of the supreme council, which had the sanction of force. It thus differed widely from the modern concept of a League of Nations bound together only by covenants and convenience. Neither Sully nor Henry under-estimated the selfishness of mankind. Sully, despite his fanatical hatred of Habsburgs, was no believer in war for the sake of war. He did not believe it was a means by which a nation's wealth could be increased. He even saw it might be as economically disastrous for the victor as for the vanquished. Though he spent much of his life in amassing materials of war, he was a believer in disarmament. He dilates on the valuable saving of expense that would be effected by the abolition of national armies. Further he appreciated that international unrest was occasioned almost entirely by fear. Here we are on the threshold of the political thought of the present day.

Sully's scheme was not entirely divorced from reality: he did not totally ignore history and the prejudices of his age. His re-division of Europe into fifteen states of approximately equal size did not ignore geographical and, even racial considerations. He classified the various states by the constitutions to which their customs were most readily adapted. He did not seek to abolish the traditional institutions of the Papacy and the Empire. He succeeded in fitting them into his scheme. He did not shock contemporary prejudices by any idea of universal toleration. He believed that every state should recognise only one religion, but at the same time he

accepted the fact that, whereas there had been only two great religions in 1555, Calvinism was now on an equal footing. Accordingly, all three religions had to be recognised.

Through Sully's efforts the "Grand Design" is for ever linked with the name of Henry of Navarre. It is true that Henry's actions make such an association impossible, and that in all probability Sully's ideas would have made no appeal to him. At the same time, much of Henry's reputation among succeeding generations derives its strength from the forgeries and distortions of his great minister. Henry doubtless was too much of a realist to think of adopting such a high-flown scheme. His bitter experience made it impossible for him to live for more than the calls and claims of the hour. Nevertheless, the "Grand Design" is a lasting monument to the greatness of his reign. So highly was Henry's capacity estimated, so much was he loved and admired, that men of all types and of all ages have believed that he did, in fact, make plans for the perpetual peace of the world and for an ordered society of nations. Sully was inspired by the magnanimity, courage and ability of his master. There can be no greater memorial to the reign of Henry of Navarre than the respect which has been inspired by the "Grand Design" of Sully.

CHAPTER VIII

THE END

I

At the beginning of May, 1610, Henry was ready for war. Thirty thousand infantry and 6,000 cavalry were collected at Châlons and Henry had declared his intention of leading them to Cleves, where he expected to be joined by 10,000 soldiers of the Evangelical Union. Fifteen thousand men under Lesdiguières were waiting in Dauphiné to help the Duke of Savoy to conquer the Milanese. Fourteen thousand troops, led by La Force, were mustered in Navarre ready to cross the Pyrenees and to unite with the Moriscos of Aragon and Catalonia, who a few months before had been expelled from Spain and were now being driven towards the frontier. These numbers are impressive. Yet, even though Henry was in position to strike his enemy from all possible directions, the Spaniards were by no means unprepared. They had 20,000 troops in the Netherlands and 30,000 round Milan. They were daily expecting reinforcements. Spinola could count on the reliability of his men and was confident of victory. Philip II had been the first sovereign to establish a permanent standing army of any magnitude. Its discipline and training were magnificent, and the

militia, which was now called up, was for the most part composed of seasoned troops.

Henry was worried by his lack of allies. He had hopes that, once he had attained some sort of success, his friends might put aside their timid counsels. He relied upon the military ambitions of Maurice of Nassau and Henry, the eldest son of James I of England. He hoped, too, that the prospect of territorial aggrandisement at the expense of Spain might persuade Venice and even the Pope to join in the attack upon the Habsburgs. As against these hopes Henry had to reckon with a most serious situation at home. Never before had he had to bear the burden of unpopularity. Even his enemies admitted his charm, but in the last months of his reign his hold over the hearts of his people was vanishing. Marshal d'Ornano, one of Henry's first and most loyal supporters, boldly informed him of the fact. He was about to undergo an operation for stone, and, believing that he was not likely to survive, he told the King in the frankest terms of the people's discontent with the severe taxation to which they were subjected. Henry had lost their affection because his motives had been discredited. Whatever modern historians may say in justification of his conduct, it is certain that the majority of his subjects believed that he was going to war simply in order to compel the surrender of a girl who had escaped him.

The Catholics especially were alarmed at what seemed to be a direct attack on the Church. The strength of the ultramontane party was increasing. Sermons directed against Henry personally once again became common, as in the days of the League. His passion for the Princess of Condé was denounced.

The cry that the church was in danger was raised once more. Henry, it was said, was bent on exterminating Catholicism, for he was going to Germany, a country full of heretics, to root out the small remnant of the faithful. The King's armies were led almost entirely by Protestants, and violent attacks were therefore launched against the Huguenots. On Christmas Day, 1609, the Jesuit Gontier preached before the King. He stigmatised the Huguenots as "scum and vermin" whom Catholics should not tolerate. He referred to their unfortunate declaration that the Pope was Antichrist, and, turning towards the King he continued: "If it really be, as they have it believed, that the Pope is Antichrist, what is the position of your marriage? What about the dispensation? What will become of the Dauphin?" For the first time Henry had lost touch with his subjects. He could no longer claim to be the father of his people.

Hitherto Henry had always been gay, witty and self-reliant. Now he became morose and irritable. He was too humane and too experienced to plunge lightheartedly into war. It had been different at Arques and Ivry, when he had drawn the sword in self-defence. Now he was the aggressor and the world distrusted his motives. Neither business nor pleasure could banish his gloomy anticipations. Intimations of coming danger were frequent. Men talked again of the sacred duty of tyrannicide. The conviction was general that Spain would not forego her wonted weapon of political assassination to despatch such a redoubtable opponent. Public prayers were offered up in some parts of the Spanish dominions for the success of a great enterprise shortly to be carried out in France. Henry

was obsessed by the fear of his impending doom. Nevertheless he did not let himself waver. L'Estoile records that on the day of his death his natural son by Gabrielle d'Estrées, César, Duke of Vendôme, came to tell him that La Brosse, the foremost astrologer of the time, had predicted that great danger menaced him that day. Henry merely laughed at him, saying : "La Brosse is an old fox who wishes to have your money, and you a young fool to believe him. Our days are counted before God." For weeks, however, the fear of death had been upon him. He had tried in vain to find solace in unaccustomed devotions. The Dauphin was not yet nine years old. If he was killed Henry knew that France would sink once more into chaos.

It was too late to turn back. Henry accordingly took every possible step to secure tranquility in his absence. Though during the last months of his life he treated the Queen with more consideration than ever before, he had the lowest opinion of her ability. She was a staunch Catholic, and her one political idea was that of a marriage alliance with the Habsburgs. Henry was unwilling to make her sole regent, especially as he appreciated that in such a case the real power would be exercised by the self-seeking Concini. In these circumstances he confided the regency to the Queen together with a council of fifteen, composed for the most part of leading Catholics. The Council's decisions were to be taken by the vote of the majority, the Queen having only a single vote. In addition, Henry established local councils in every province to assist the Council of Regency. Every decision had to be communicated to the King, and every matter of importance had, if

possible, to be referred to him. By these means he hoped to counteract the machination of Concini and Leonora his wife, whom he dared not dismiss.

The Queen was none too pleased with Henry's arrangements, and, urged on by Concini, she begged the King to give her a ceremonial coronation before he left for the front. Marie feared that his passion for Charlotte would lead him to try to persuade the Pope to annul their marriage. Domestic storms, always unpleasing to the free and easy King, grew more frequent. Marie pointed out with truth that her formal anointing would add to the dignity and security of her position and make her claim to the regency in the event of the King's death indisputable. Henry yielded to her prayers with bad grace. The Queen's coronation delayed the opening of the campaign by three weeks—from the 29th April to the 19th May—and in addition cost him much money which he could ill afford to spend. The King's forebodings increased. "My friend," he said to Sully, "this consecration presages me some misfortune. They will kill me; I shall never depart from this city. My enemies have no other remedy but my death; they have told me that I shall be killed at the first magnificence that I make, and that I shall die in a coach. This makes me often tremble when I am in one, and to be fearful in spite of myself." Sully urged him to join his army at once, but so vehement were the lamentations of the Queen that he remained to satisfy her.

II

On the 13th May, 1610, Marie de' Medici was crowned by Cardinal Joyeuse in the Abbey Church of St. Denis. It was a scene of great magnificence. At three o'clock in the afternoon Henry, still devoutly fasting, took communion. Soon afterwards he returned to Paris through gaily decorated streets. The Queen's ceremonial entry into Paris was planned for Sunday, the 16th May. The King's troops were already assembled on the frontiers of Champagne; fifty pieces of artillery had been sent from the Arsenal. It was arranged that Henry should join the army immediately after the approaching pageant. The one inexplicable factor was that Spain and the Low Countries remained in a state of complete calm; no special preparations for resistance were seen. Spinola's highly trained army was comparatively small and, however efficient, could not hope to be victorious against Henry's immense armaments. It may well be that the Spaniards were already relying on the knife of some unknown assassin.

On the morning after the coronation the King showed himself restless and uneasy, but nevertheless he went as usual to hear mass at the Church of the Feuillants. The Queen, who had returned from St. Denis, was alarmed by what the astrologers had predicted for that day and begged him to remain in the Louvre. Henry laughed at her fears, but he was obviously depressed and anxious. He walked in the gardens of the Tuileries with Guise, Bassompierre and some other friends. He talked constantly of

death. "When I am no more," he said, "you will know what you have lost."

The King took his dinner in silence. Afterwards he went to his room to sleep, but he could not rest. Between three and four in the afternoon he ordered his coach. He had determined to see the preparations for the Queen's reception and to take the opportunity of visiting Sully at the Arsenal. Sully was suffering from an old wound and was taking a course of "bains artificiels." The day was warm and Henry ordered the roof of the coach to be opened. It was a large and cumbrous vehicle. Henry sat in the middle surrounded by Epernon, Lavardin, Roquelaure, Montbazon, and La Force. None of those present noticed a tall, thin man with red hair and gloomy features who pushed towards the King but could not reach him for the crowd. The coach started and some of the crowd followed. Passing down the Rue Honoré, the royal party turned into the Rue de la Ferronnerie. The street was narrow, and especially so since a number of small shops had been built against the wall of the cemetery of the Innocents. At the moment the coach entered the street, a cart, containing barrels of wine, was on the right side, and another, with a load of hay, on the left. The coach was compelled to stop. To avoid the block, the footmen ran through the cemetery, thinking to rejoin the coach at the other side of the shops.

The Duke of Epernon was reading a letter to Henry. Suddenly a man who had followed the coach from the Louvre, with one foot on the spokes of the front wheel, leant forward and with his left hand plunged a knife into the King's breast. At this blow Henry cried out, "I am wounded." The assassin struck

again. A third blow was deflected by the Duke of Montbazon, but it was too late. Henry of Navarre was dead.

Epernon, however, assured the people that the King was only wounded and ordered the coach to return to the Louvre. With lowered blinds the coach reached the palace. In tense silence the body was taken within. But there was nothing to be done, for Ravallac had done his work well. Henry's recent unpopularity was forgotten in a moment. When the news of the King's death reached the people their manifestation of grief was extraordinary. Henry had ruled strongly and well and they had loved him. There was no one to take his place. Many, it is said, turned to their families with the words : "What will become of you, my children? You have lost your father."

III

The assassin made no attempt to escape. The guards would have killed him at once as they had killed Jacques Clément, the murderer of Henry III, if Epernon, fortunately for his own reputation, had not ordered him to be arrested. Such was the fury of the populace that it was deemed advisable to take him no further than the neighbouring Hôtel de Retz. Later he was taken to the Conciergerie, where prisoners who were to be tried before the Parlement were detained. His examination followed on the 18th May. It appeared that his name was François Ravallac and that he was a native of Angoulême, about thirty-one years of age. He had been a novice in a monastery of the Feuillants, but had never taken his final vows. Since then he had been a schoolmaster,

but had recently been living on his wits. Filled with wild and superstitious notions, he had listened to all the virulent attacks upon the King which were daily launched by the old adherents of the League. His hallucinations had alarmed the Feuillants and they had kept him no more than six weeks. At Christmas, 1609, he had strange visions. At midnight he had felt a desire to "sing the psalms of David, beginning with the *Dixit Dominus* . . . together with the *Miserere* and the *De Profundis* in full, and it seemed to him that while he was singing he had a trumpet at his lips, which made a sound as loud as that which is made in war." He felt he had to find the King to tell him to expel the Huguenots. He failed to make an opportunity. Hearing that the King was about to wage war on the Pope, he had thereafter resolved to kill him. For this purpose he had stolen a knife from an inn and had attempted to find Henry. His courage had failed him; he had broken the point of his knife and set out for Angoulême. Soon, however, he managed to overcome his "weakness and infidelity." He refashioned his knife and returned to Paris, where he had followed the King two days before he got his opportunity. He had no accomplices; he had never revealed his purpose to anyone, and he had been impelled by nothing but the design of delivering France from the rule of one who was at heart a heretic, and who was about to lead his armies into Germany to overthrow the Catholic religion in that country. Such was his own statement, and not even torture could induce him to make any addition or variation. Men of his type seem impervious to pain. He believed his act had won him a crown of glory and that his name would be

venerated by all posterity. Many were accused of having incited him, but on the whole there seems no reason to doubt the truth of his story.

Ravaillac's punishment is almost too barbarous to relate. It took place on the 27th May, 1610, in the notorious Place de la Grève, the Tyburn of Paris. First the hand that struck the blow was cut off. Then the flesh of his breasts, arms and thighs was torn off with red-hot pincers, and finally his mutilated body was dragged to pieces by four horses. James Howell, a traveller for an English glass manufacturer, writing from Paris on the 12th May, 1620, describes what he had heard of Ravaillac's execution in these words :

“Many Consultations were held how to punish Ravaillac, and there were some Italian Physicians that undertook to prescribe a Torment, that should last a constant torment for three days ; but he scap'd only with this, His Body was pull'd between four Horses, that one might hear his Bones crack, and after the Dislocation they were set again ; and so he was carry'd in a Cart standing half naked, with a Torch in that Hand which had committed the Murder : And in the Place where the Act was done, it was cut off, and a Gauntlet of hot Oil was clap'd upon the Stump, to staunch the Blood ; whereat he gave a doleful Shriek. Then he was brought upon a Stage, where a new pair of Boots was provided for him, half fill'd with boiling Oil ; then his Body was pincer'd, and hot Oil pour'd into the Holes. In all the extremity of this Torture, he scarce shew'd any sense of Pain. . . . He bore up against all these Torments about

three hours before he died. All the Confession that could be drawn from him, was, That he thought to have done God good Service, to take away that King which would have embroil'd all Christendom in an endless War."

Whatever the precise order of his sufferings, contemporaries are all agreed that François Ravaillac met his death like a martyr.

IV

Henry's body lay in the *petit cabinet* on the first floor at the Louvre. The Queen was loud in her lamentations. "The King is dead ! The King is dead !" she cried over and over again, to which the Chancellor, Nicolas de Sillery, gravely replied : "Your Majesty will excuse me. The King of France never dies." Then, turning to the Dauphin, he said : "There is the living King, Madame !" But the living King was a boy of nine and there was no longer a strong hand at the helm of state.

A new era of civil strife had begun. The greatness of Henry IV is best appreciated by a comparison of the tranquillity of his reign with the anarchy which preceded and followed it. His popularity was so widespread because men are always ready to suffer hardships if at the same time they have security. The government fell into the hands of a weak and inexperienced woman. France longed for the return of a strong King. She idealised the memory of Henry of Navarre, who, despite his faults, had played the man, and who, despite the burdens of his administration, had given them ordered security.

Following the custom of the day, Henry's body was opened in the presence of twenty-six physicians and surgeons. They declared that he was in the most perfect health and that in the course of nature he might have expected to live another thirty years. The Jesuit fathers begged for his heart, and buried it in the church at La Flèche, close to the college, which Henry had so liberally endowed. The body was embalmed, wrapped in lead, and placed in a wooden coffin covered with a cloth of gold. A canopy was placed above it and two altars were set up on each side, at which mass was said for eighteen days continuously. Later, in the church of St. Denis with great pomp, Henry IV, the victor of Coutras and of Ivry, the author of the Edict of Nantes, the father of his people, was laid to rest with his predecessors, the Kings and Queens of France.

V

Henry of Navarre is the most popular of French Kings. His self-reliance, his strength of mind and, above all, his charm of manner, have made a universal appeal. On the 15th August, 1755, Horace Walpole wrote that he had been reading how "the King was often seen lying upon a common straw-bed among his soldiers with a piece of brown bread in one hand and a piece of charcoal in the other with which to draw an encampment or town that he was besieging." Walpole went on to remark with truth: "If this is not a character and a picture I do not know what is." The foundation of his posthumous reputation is in large measure due to his good humour and his readiness to mix on equal terms with all classes. The

contrast between his manner and the ceremonious formalism of the Versailles of Louis XIV and Louis XV is sufficient in itself to account for the reverence in which Henry's name has always been held by Frenchmen.

Historians, particularly in the nineteenth century, have always attempted to make him a greater man than he was. They impute to him motives and aspirations which would have been far beyond his comprehension. An honest narrative of the life of Henry IV cannot but distinguish the Henry of history from the Henry of legend. The quotations at the outset of this book show that many of his contemporaries deemed him the wonder of their age. The lustre which always gathers round royal soldiers, even if as merciless as the Black Prince or as reckless as Henry V of England, has long been associated with the victor of Arques and Ivry. The Protestant champion of tradition wears laurels which he never earned. Partisan history and partisan poetry give the white plume of Navarre something of the magic of King Arthur's Excalibur. The horrors which accompanied the revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV have wholly obscured the inadequacy of its provisions. They were, in fact, inadequate because they constituted a state within a state—a system wholly inconsistent with the idea of a strong national Kingdom, and because they were founded on a compromise between belligerents instead of on a common faith in the principle of toleration. Yet in the *Henriade*, Voltaire tried to make "the first great tolerant" the central figure of an epic, while many later English historians like Buckle were stirred by Henry's responsibility for the Edict to ascribe to him

an enlightenment of intellect and a grandeur of thought which were alike beyond his powers. Again, nationalist writers have glorified him as a defender of France against foreign invaders, forgetting how far in his later years mere lust or caprice inspired his activities. Thanks mainly to Sully's memoirs, the peace-lovers of our own age, with whom he had no single idea in common, have seen in him a prophet of the League of Nations. In truth and in fact, he did not know what idealism means. He did not dedicate himself to the service of his country like William the Silent, still less to the service of mankind like Hugo Grotius. All his plans and pursuits were primarily for himself alone. No one, of course, has ever pretended that he was a saint ; but he was not even a hero.

Yet if Henry failed to live up to the utterly different moral standards which later generations have devised for their rulers, he was still a king of splendid achievements and of outstanding quality. No one becomes the centre of a legend unless he has in him the roots of greatness. Henry was a true leader of men. Tolerant towards all creeds and to the passions they inspire because he was at heart a rationalist and completely sceptical as to the virtues of all abstract theories, he enabled France to emerge from the miseries and calamities of the wars of religion and thus to escape the hard fate of seventeenth century Germany. Again, because he was a rationalist, he could also look on politics as something more than the interplay of dynastic and personal rivalries. He thought of France as a nation, not as a group of feudal powers ; and he was her first sovereign to be endowed with what, on occasions at least, can fairly be called

an approximation to the modern mind. He discovered and made Sully, one of the world's great civil servants. He could give heart to the common soldier and he understood the common countryman. Almost alone among French sovereigns, he entered into the peasant's attitude towards life and appreciated that intense spiritual tie between the peasant and the soil which has meant so much in the history of Europe. Incapable of malice, he could make use of men whose whole lives had been spent in hostility to each other. Through the magic of his personality he could unite all to himself and to his service.

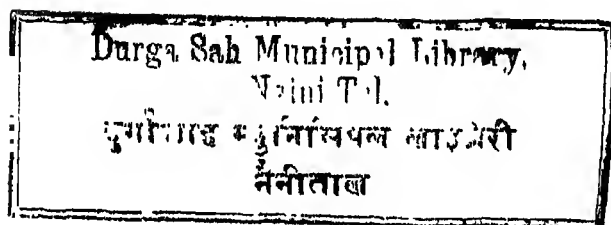
Hence defenders of the monarchical principle in France have always delighted in his shining name. When the allied armies entered Paris on the 1st April, 1814, and the King of Prussia went to the opera, the orchestra opened the evening by playing the grand old drinking song, *Vive Henri Quatre*, which became, according to Gustave Chouquet, "the national anthem of royalty at the Bourbon restoration." He was, however, much more than the Henry IV of the song, with his triple gift

"De boire et de battre,
Et d'être un vert galant."

Through his own efforts he raised France to the rank of a first-class power. It is therefore not surprising that his country has forgiven him his sins of the flesh, which were all too many, and has remembered rather his virility and his endurance, and how wisely he taught the lessons of national unity and religious toleration, which lie at the foundation

of all sound statesmanship. His name lives for ever as a rallying point for French patriots. The next best thing to attaining virtue is to inspire it in others.

THE END



CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

(Events in English history are in italics)

- 1553. *Accession of Mary Tudor.*
- Dec. 13. Birth of Henry of Navarre at Pau.
- 1559. Death of Henry II : Accession of Francis II.
Accession of Elizabeth.
- 1560. Death of Francis II : Accession of Charles IX.
- 1562. The Tolerant Edicts of January : Navarre
joins the Catholics : Huguenot defeat at
Dreux.
- 1563. Murder of Guise : Capture of Le Havre from
the English.
- 1564-5. Tour of Catherine de' Medici and Charles IX.
- 1569. Huguenot defeat at Jarnac : Death of Condé :
Coligny defeated at Montcontour.
- 1570. Peace of St. Germain : Negotiations for
Henry's marriage.
- 1572. June. Death of Jeanne d'Albret.
- Aug. 17. Marriage of Henry and Margaret of Valois.
- Aug. 24. Massacre of St. Bartholomew.
- 1573. Henry at the siege of La Rochelle : Associa-
tion with Charlotte de Sauves : Election of
Anjou to the throne of Poland.
- 1574. Death of Charles IX : Accession of Henry III :
Negotiations for marriage of Alençon and
Elizabeth.
- 1575. Sept. Escape of Anjou.
- 1576. Feb. Escape of Henry.
- April. Favourable Peace of Monsieur.
- Dec. States-General at Blois and Catholic revival.
- 1577. Treaty of Bergerac.
- 1578. Association with La Fosseuse : Margaret at
Nérac until 1582.
- 1580. The Lovers' war : Capture of Cahors : Peace
of Fleix.
- 1581. Anjou in the Netherlands : Association with
Corisande.

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1584. June. Death of Anjou.
 July. Murder of William the Silent.
 Dec. The League of Paris.
1585. Edict of July (all tolerant edicts revoked).
 Sept. Henry and Condé excommunicated. Margaret at Usson.
1587. *Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots*: War of the "Three Henry's."
 Oct. Henry wins Coutras: Guisc defeats the Germans.
1588. March. Death of Condé.
 May. "The day of the Barricades": Henry III capitulates to the League: Estates-General at Blois.
- Dec. Murder of Guise by the King: *The Armada*.
 1589. Jan. Death of Catherine de' Medici.
 April. League of the King and Henry.
 July. Excommunication of Henry III.
 Aug. Henry III murdered: Cardinal Bourbon proclaimed "Charles X" by the League.
- Sept. Henry wins Arques.
 1590. March. Henry wins Ivry.
 April. Siege of Paris.
 May. Death of "Charles X."
 Aug. Intervention of Parma: Beginning of association with Gabrielle d'Estrées.
1591. Terrorism of the "Sixteen," and their suppression by Mayenne.
1592. Parma again saves the League.
 1593. Estates-General of the League at Paris.
- July. Henry abjures Protestantism.
 1594. March. Henry enters Paris.
 Dec. Chastel's attempt to assassinate Henry.
1595. Expulsion of the Jesuits: War declared on Spain.
 Sept. Henry absolved by the Pope.
1596. Submission of Mayenne: The Spaniards take Calais.
- Oct. Assembly of Notables at Rouen.
 1597. March. The Spaniards take Amiens.
 Sept. Amiens recaptured.
1598. April. Edict of Nantes.
 May. Peace of Vervins with Spain.
 Sept. Death of Philip II of Spain.
1599. April. Death of Gabrielle.
 Nov. Henry's marriage with Margaret annulled.
 Dec. Association with Henriette d'Entragues.

1600. Aug. War with Savoy.
 Oct. Henry marries Marie de' Medici (by proxy).
1601. Jan. Peace of Lyons with Savoy.
 Sept. Birth of Louis XIII : Biron in England.
1602. Arrest and execution of Biron.
1603. Sept. Return of the Jesuits.
Death of Elizabeth : Accession of James I.
1604. Plot of the Entragues family and Auvergne.
1605. *The Gunpowder Plot.*
1606. Feb. Rosny made Duke of Sully : Measures against
 Bouillon : Surrender of Sedan.
1607. Henry mediates in the quarrel between Venice
 and the Pope.
1608. Jan. League with the Dutch : The Evangelical
 Union.
1609. The Twelve Years' Truce : Death of the
 Duke of Cleves-Jülich.
 April. Marriage of Condé and Charlotte de Mont-
 morency.
 Nov. Their flight to the Netherlands.
1610. May 12. Coronation of Marie de' Medici.
 May 14. Assassination of Henry.

THE HOUSE OF VALOIS

Charles of Angoulême

d. 1496

descended from Charles V of France *d.* 1380

Francis I

d. 1547

m. Claude *d.* of Louis XII

Henry II, *d.* 1559,

m. Catherine de' Medici, *d.* 1589

Margaret,

m. Emmanuel Philibert of Savoy

Francis II,

m. Mary,

Queen of Scots,

d. 1560

Charles IX,

m. Elizabeth

of Austria,

d. of Maxi-

milian II,

d. 1574

Henry III,

m. Louise of

Lorraine,

d. 1589

Elizabeth,

d. 1568,

m. Philip II

of Spain

Isabella,

m. Archduke

Albert, Regents

of the Netherlands

Claude,

m. Charles II

of Lorraine

Francis,

Duke of

Alençon and

Anjou,

d. 1584

Margaret, *m.*

Henry IV

of France

Margaret *m.*

Henry II d'Albret

King of Navarre

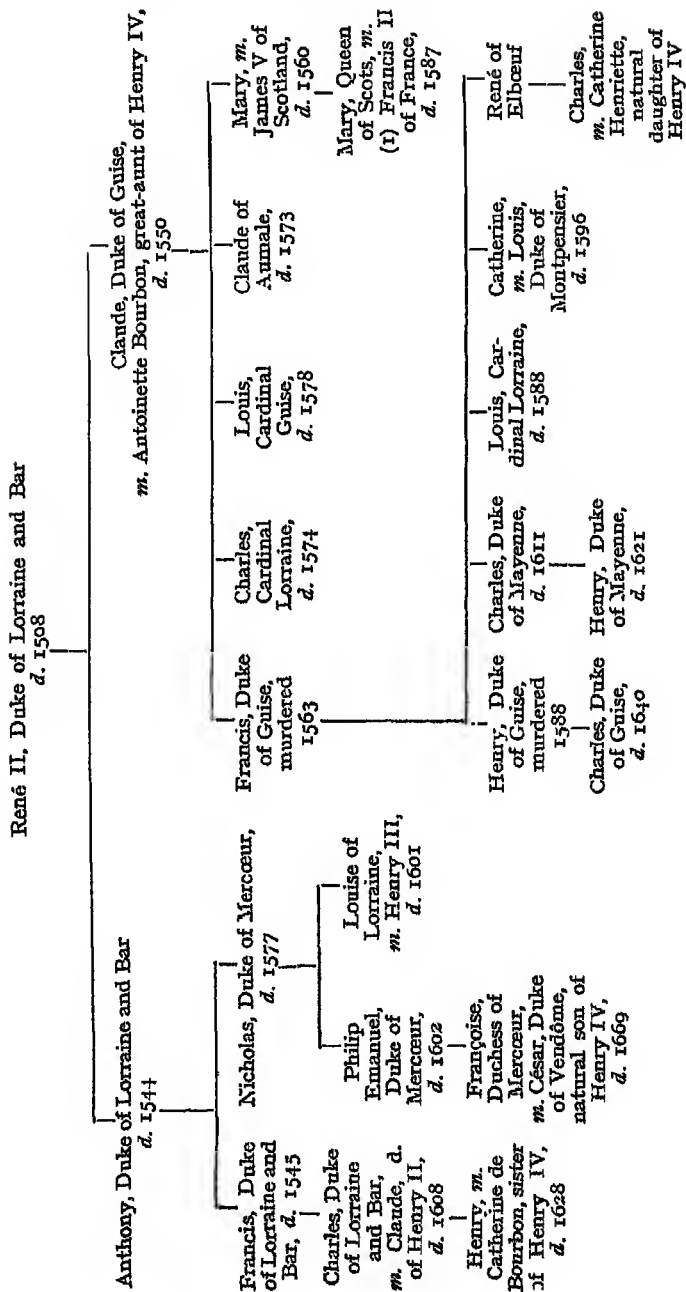
Jeanne, Queen of

Navarre,

m. Antoine of

Bourbon

THE HOUSE OF LORRAINE



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Mémoires du Duc d'Angoulême.
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Mémoires de Bassompierre.
Mémoires de Tavannes.
Mémoires de Duplessis-Mornay.
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F. J. GOODNOW in the *Columbia Law Review* of 1920, and

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Useful biographies of the period are to be found in the *Biographie Universelle* (1862-66), and some excellent pictures in the volume on Henry IV in HACHETTE's *Encyclopédie par l'image*.

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